# My Life, My Work

**Justice Harihar Mahapatra**

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# My Life, My Work

Justice Harihar Mahapatra

*Translated from the Odia*
*by*
Ashok K. Mohanty

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# FOREWORD

The autobiography of Harihar Babu—My Life, My Work—is going for an English edition. There was a demand for the book for a long time.

Harihar Babu had many firsts to his credit during his time. This is the opinion of people who have come in close contact with him. He was my father-in-law. He was also my guru in the legal profession. I built a strong foundation for myself after working for eight years with him. This had helped me a great deal in my later life.

Harihar Babu took care of other people without bothering about his own inconveniences. Many of his friends have confided this to me. He himself had grown up amid poverty and therefore looked after the welfare of others. He was neither in active politics nor did he subscribe to any particular viewpoint. But he had the ability to carry most people with himself. He was a resourceful person with a great deal of confidence in his own abilities. He could put forth his point of view forcefully. He could wield his pen fearlessly. And there was always a smile on his face. These were his greatest strengths. It is rare to come across such a sensitive citizen these days.

His autobiography is enjoyable reading. The new edition would definitely show a new path to the new generation.

**Ranganath Mishra**
*Former Chief Justice of India*

Cuttack
01–07–2010

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# Translator's Note

This is a blockbuster of a book—make no mistake about it. It is a storehouse of information about one of the most interesting phases of Orissa's history which makes fascinating reading because of the inimitable style of the author. The book is unputdownable.

I had my misgivings when Sri Anant Mahapatra, the youngest son of the author, asked me to translate the book into English. Autobiographies were never my cup of tea. However, as I went deeper into the book, I found it no less exciting than any best-selling thriller. That one man can lead such a fulfilling life and can be engaged in a myriad of activities simultaneously is indeed revealing. There seemed never a dull moment in the life he led. Justice Ranganath Mishra has put it succinctly in the foreword to the book when he says, "He was neither in active politics nor did he subscribe to any particular viewpoint. But he had the ability to carry most people with himself."

Let not the sombre face on the cover page befool you. There is a humble, empathetic, self-deprecating and down-to-earth man behind the veneer who also possessed a subtle sense of humour.

I am grateful to Late Lila Ray who made my task of translating the first few chapters of the book a lot easier.

**Ashok K. Mohanty**

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# A Note on the English Edition

When the second edition of my father's autobiography 'JIBANA O JIBIKA' in Oriya was published in 2004, after his passing away in 1994, many of his admirers and our friends in India and abroad were keen to read it in English, not being familiar with Oriya.

My nephew Pradeep (son of my eldest brother Prabhat) took the initiative, encouraged by my brother Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Basant and the family and a journey stared. Luckily my father's intimate friend Annanda Shankar Ray and his wife Lila Ray had translated few chapters after it was first published in 1987 but for the complete translation I had to really search for one who would have the time and inclination.

I record my deep appreciation for Ashok K. Mohanty who worked for nearly a year continuously with his mind, heart and hands. The journey seems to end with Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd. taking up the publication of 'MY LIFE, MY WORK'.

Three generations have been awakened by my father's sense of values with few words, fewer advice but with his LIFE and his WORK.

Anant Mahapatra

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# Preface

This is not a biographical almanac. Nor is it a treatise on history. It only deals with a few events. My reactions to a few of them have perhaps been expressed at times.

Some portions of the book had been published in the magazine *Sahakar* because of the interest shown by Bichitrananda Kar. He has very kindly permitted me to include those in the book. I am grateful to a few litterateur-friends of mine who had made approbatory comments on those portions.

Harihar Mahapatra

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# *Dedication*

*To my dear departed friend 'Sabuja Kabi' Baikunthanath Patnaik*

***Baikuntha,***

*Had we met just once more on this earth,*
*How happy would you have been to see this unworthy's toils!*

*You were the one who published my articles in 'Sahitya' and 'Mukur',*
*How you took me to task whenever I stopped writing for the nonce!*

*You marked my speeches as poetry in full flow,*
*My greetings seemed to you to be basketfuls of love!*

*We still see each other and hear weepy voices,*
*Accept my love-offering of those unforgettable days!*

***Hari***

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# Sri Rama

One's place of birth, day of birth and time of birth do not seem to carry any importance, especially in the evening of one's life. Yet, these three things are securely knotted in the memories of our parents in our childhood. Astrologers use these as their bases to prepare horoscopes. They are touted as basic to our character and fate. And the day, hour, month and year of our birth, and the constellation and star under the influence of which we came into this world are meticulously studied when one's health begins to falter. Prophesies are made on the basis of these calculations—whether a student will take to his studies or not, whether he will acquire riches, whether he will rise to a position of esteem, whether he will marry once or more than once, and so forth. The astrologers are taken at their word until the opposite of what is predicted occurs. It is only natural for parents to want to know the fate that is in store for their children. The faith in astrology is deep-rooted. And the power of parents to shape the destiny of the one to whom they have given birth is limited. Even though life begins in the wail of the newborn in the confinement room, its end is beyond the jurisdiction of the parents. The help of astrologers has to be taken to know the future. Every man's longing to bring the unknown within the purview of the known is the source of his faith in astrology. But what is its use when looking back in the evening of a life that has already been lived?

Pilgrimages are not made on a father's shoulders or in a mother's lap. A man can take to the road only when he is able to stand on his own feet. He does not remember when he first stood up. Years pass. He realizes his power for the first time in his games with other boys, playing Rama and Ravana in the backyard, bare-bodied, his flesh oiled and anointed with

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turmeric paste. A day comes when he bends the slender branch of a Kalka and binds the ends, making a bow. Fitting an arrow he makes of *kyangra* wood to it, he lays the cassia tree, supposedly a demon, on the ground. I feel amazed even when I recall it today after so many years. The boy Rama, who played with the boys of his own age in my childhood, came again of his own accord, in the form of an icon brought to me by a distant kinsman. Games were played in the village, at Biswanathpur, near to Sakhigopal. The icon appeared at Chandni Chowk, Cuttack. I began practicing law towards the end of 1932. I embarked upon the construction of my house on 1st January, 1937 at the Chandni Chowk square quite audaciously and moved into the house on 22nd May. Only the ground floor was ready for occupation. The front porch and the portico were yet to be completed. These were finished by the year end. Another year passed before the upper storey was ready. The bed room was moved upstairs in due course. As I came out of the house one morning some days later, I found an elderly man sleeping on the porch, a bundle by his side. I took him for a client. It is not unusual for clients to arrive at the houses of lawyers in the middle of the night. The elderly man sat up, wakened by the sound of my feet. He was very fair and the face was swathed in a smile. There was no sign of diffidence in his eyes. He seemed to expect me to greet him with a polite namaskar. He said he had come from Benaras. He had reached Cuttack by the night train and found everyone asleep when he arrived. The dawn was about to break. I recalled him very indistinctly to be Maheswar Mishra, the son-in-law of my father's sister. I dared not ask. I had seen him a long time back when I was about eight or nine. We had been to Madhsudanpur, a village near Kodala in Ganjam district. My father's elder brother and his family were with us. We stopped *en route* at someone's house at Khallikote. The house had a high stone porch. It was a small house with two rooms. An extremely fair young man, about eight to ten years older than I, lived in the house. We spent half a day there. His guardians took good care of us. I was told that they were our kinsmen. Two of my father's five sisters had married two brothers of a family at Madhusudanpur. One of them was Jeje Pishi and the other one was Baikoli Pishi. The sacred thread ceremony of Baikoli Pishi's son was to be held and we had come to attend the ceremony. There were no buses those days. To be able to undertake a long journey by a bullock cart was a luxury. The common practice was to proceed on foot, stopping several times on the way to get one's breath. Younger children walked too, and the youngest rode on their fathers' shoulders or were carried in their arms. A child was severely reprimanded if he got hungry or if his legs ached on the

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way and he dropped behind. Baikoli Pishi's husband had a title of honour; he was known as Bharti Bhushan. He had studied Sanskrit and was reputed to be a pandit in the surrounding villages. His family owned land in the village and was prosperous. It was the custom those days to invite kinsmen to family functions like the *bratopanayan*, thread ceremony, marriage and *shraadh* ceremony. Surjya bandhus dropped in at times. Friends were not ordinarily invited to such family functions. Things are different now. Those who matter in the conduct of our daily lives or those to whom we are obliged for some reason get precedence over kinsmen at such functions. We would not have travelled such a long distance to attend a sacred thread ceremony if the social bond would not have been as strong as that. The fair young man I had already seen and saw again for a short time amidst the festivity associated with the ceremony had such impressive features that I still remembered them after twenty five years. In the lineaments of the elderly visitor from Benaras, I recognized Maheswar Mishra, a member of the family of royal priests. He was the husband of Baikoli Pishi's daughter, Neema Didi. He had assumed that I was certain to know him when he was my kinsman. He did not disclose his identity. But I had not seen him for more than twenty five years. There was no communication between us either. All that I knew was what I had heard. He had taken offence at the shabby treatment meted out to him by the king and had left for Benaras. Hurt and anger go together. He supported himself at Benaras by giving discourses in Sanskrit and acting as a priest. He had taken his family with him. He had returned alone now after several years. Much can be said without words. Memory, though faint, was stirred; kinship reestablished. It is true that he lived in Benaras. But he used to meet all those who went there on pilgrimage from Khallikote or thereabouts. Occasionally, he found himself face to face with old friends. Distant kinsmen were always warmly welcomed when one lived far away from the ancestral home. He had kept himself informed about the developments in our family. His wife, Neema Didi, was even more interested than he was in our affairs as she was my father's niece. They had heard that I was practicing as a lawyer at Cuttack after completion of my studies. She had heard that I was living in Oriya Bazar. So he had gone there from the railway station. He learned there that we were living in Chandni Chowk. It is beyond etiquette these days for a guest to turn up at someone's house without prior information. But such niceties had no meaning for Maheswar Mishra. He had no hesitation in going to the house of a kinsman as his elder in years and being the husband of his father's niece. Especially when he had come on such a special errand! I

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invited him into the house and made him comfortable. After he had bathed and refreshed himself, he asked, "You have a prayer room, haven't you?"

He took out a small parcel from his bundle and held it in his palm before entering the prayer room. My wife was in charge of the prayer room. She presided over everything connected to it. *Mahalaksmi* was the deity enshrined there. A few other covered containers were there too. But no deity had as yet occupied the throne she had installed there. Maheswar Mishra unwrapped the parcel in his palm. It held a triple icon, three small figures of Sri Rama, Sita and Laxman. Both of us, husband and wife, were amazed. Her gratification was of a kind rarely seen.

I was Mishraji's brother-in-law. My wife bowed to his feet without the slightest hesitation. We were, all three of us, speechless. As silent as the three deities on the lowest step of the throne. All our eyes were fixed on the images. My wife, overcome with gratitude, prayed. I had been staring at the beautiful images that filled us with wonder at their grace. Mishraji, having accomplished the purpose of his journey, sat with his hands pressed together. Words were not always needed to answer questions and none of us had a word to say. Our hearts were throbbing to the same pulse. Questions were answered silently as they took shape in such situations. The experience was direct and simple for us sitting close beside each other. It would have been less simple for people far apart.

Mishraji was the first to speak. He spoke with the accents of Ganjam. He had been living in a Hindi-speaking belt for twelve years. But the accent of the birth place remained unaffected. A person's antecedents are as easy to determine from his speech as a child's paternity from his blood. Latent physical characteristics often surface suddenly after generations, decisively setting their stamp upon the physical body. Numerous examples are to be found in mystery novels as also in actual detection of crimes. Appearances may be superficially altered by the help of surgery and application of various ointments. But the physical structure continues to remain unchanged from one generation to the other. The accent of people who migrated to America from Scotland and England many centuries ago and the speech of their descendants have retained its distinctive accent, an accent still in evidence. Maheswar Mishra had been out of his home state for only twelve years. How could he not have the full sonorous vocalization of voice that distinguishes the cultivated speech of high caste people of Ganjam? His father was an eminent Sanskrit scholar. Sanskrit had set its stamp on Maheswar Mishra too. Resonant language in an exalted style is

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used to describe the attributes of deities. Those who know Sanskrit borrow words and phrases from it freely. Those who do not know the language say 'let it be heard' instead of 'hear' and use plural pronouns as honorifics in stead of singular forms in their effort to overstate things. Another example of such use of language was found earlier in the brahmin community of Puri. Instead of saying 'When did you get here?' people enquired respectfully, 'When did your honour arrive?' often combining formal and informal forms of speech ungrammatically. Expressions of this kind were used by Brahmins to show esteem. I visited a village near Puri about a month ago. It was a farmers' village. I was received with cordial affection. One of the elders repeated time and again, "You've come, have you? How fortunate we are!" Mishraji's speech was pleasant. The use he made of various expressions like these gave it a special grace. He used the informal pronoun *tume* in a simple and natural way in addressing me as I was younger to him. Occasionally, he used the formal pronoun *aapana* to show affectionate regard. The impress of the Puri brahmin community was on him. His ancestors had moved from Puri to the Khallikote royal court. He had married into a family that had also moved from Puri and settled permanently at Madhusudanpur. As a result, the characteristics of his speech were doubly strong. Even though I was able to detect some difference in the length of vowels, there was no marked deviation from the way we spoke.

He said he had purchased the triple icon two years earlier. On his way to the Kashi Viswanath temple, there were a number of shops selling icons of brass, stone and marble. Most of the shops sold icons of Siva and Parvati. This triple icon of Rama, Sita and Laxman was in one of the shops. It had attracted his attention again and again. For a number of days, he passed by, pretending not to see it. He had a dream one night after a few days. The shop appeared vividly in the dream. It seemed to him in the morning that he had been given an indistinct sign. He asked the shopkeeper the price of the icon but, having insufficient money, was unable to make the purchase. He asked the price again a few days later. The shopkeeper, moved by the brahmin's interest in the icon, reduced it somewhat. Mishraji was able to buy it. He brought the icon home. His wife, Neema Didi, was happy. But the three deities remained as they had been in the shop. Mishraji was a Shakta. Goddess Durga reigned supreme in his prayer room. Why had Mishraji brought the triple icon when he himself was not a devotee of Sri Rama? We did not know the answer. Neither did he. I recalled that he had made the purchase at about the same time that we started to build our house. Two years passed. He wanted to

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pay a visit to his birthplace. What's the good of eating off a potsherd out of pique at a thief? (It a thief steals your utensils, you buy another set to eat. You don't eat off a potsherd.) A person's life is linked inseparably with his birthplace. The confinement room and the cremation ground were both inseparable from the village. Can the people of the village be blamed if the king did not have a conscience? No matter how friendly one may be with new people in a new place, one's ties with them were superficial. Mishraji felt the urge to return to his village, repair his ancestral home, and assert his claims to the office of the priest to the royal family. The wife and children stayed back at Benaras. Mishraji started out to inspect his ancestral home. With him, in his bundle, were the three deities, Sri Rama, Sita and Laxman.

"Why are you taking those," asked Neema Didi.

"I'll give them to Hari Babu at Cuttack on the way," Mishraji answered.

The thought had not occurred to him before. It had come all of a sudden as he was tying up his bundle. He had reached our house now. He would go on to Khallikote on the morrow.

"You've a throne in your prayer room anticipating the arrival of a deity. Lo! The deities have come."

We were deeply obliged; he was unconcerned. We did not have the courage to enquire about the price of the triple icon nor did we offer him money. The icon had become priceless because of the way it had come to us. My wife had been a devotee of Sri Rama from her childhood. Her grandmother had been widowed young. She had three sons and two daughters. My wife was the eldest daughter of the eldest son. The two other sons lived separately. My wife had been assigned the task of supplying one hundred and eight leaves of the basil plant every morning for the grandmother's service. The leaves were laid at the feet of the deity as a holy offering. Each leaf was inscribed with the name Rama, written in sandalwood paste. The old widow spent the whole day in various religious observances, starting early in the morning after her bath. It was only natural that my wife should cherish a strong faith in the gods after years of engaging in such devout activities. The arrival of the icon was an advent to her. Sri Ramachandra had shown his compassion. It could not be dismissed lightly too. Sri Rama only knew whether it was true or not. Maheswar Mishra continued his journey to Khallikote. That was the end of the journey. He died there a month later. He had not taken ill. Who can say why the summons to return to his birthplace had come to him in

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Benaras? Or was it at the behest of Sri Rama that he had set out on his return journey? Had not a divine compassion been shown to people as humble as we were? In our childhood games, I was always Rama. I was Rama when we staged the slaying of Bali. And I pursued the Golden Deer as Rama. My playmates did not like that. Yet, things always turned that way. Did the Rama of the childhood games receive the icon in his married life? I played Rama then upon seeing the *Ramlila Jatra*. Now the real journey of my life had started upon seeing the real Rama! Such things happened! Settings changed in our lives unknown to us. That's the amazing part of it.

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# Our Games

The younger children in the village played four games: *khunti khunti, bohu chori, bohu bohu* and *ram lila.*

There were coconut trees in front and at the back of the house. Two teams of four children each are required for Khunti Khunti. The members of one team take up positions at the base of four coconut trees. Then they run from one tree to the other. A boy is out if he is touched by a member of the opposite team as he runs from one tree to the other. A team loses one game when all four of its members are out. Each team takes its turn.

Two teams take part in the game of *Bohu Chori* also. The teams are equal. A player is seated on the ground as the *Bohu.* The other members stand guard over the Bohu. The opposing team forms a line some distance away. One of its members takes a deep breath and begins to hum loudly and continuously. His task is to carry off the Bohu to his side. Then he rushes forward. He is out if one of the guards touches him or catches him before he runs out of breath and stops humming. A team loses the game when all its members are out. The winners carry off the Bohu triumphantly. Abusive language, insults and counter-insults are an integral part of the game. Quarrels, disputes and shouting are all a part of the fun. The players get a taste of democracy when a dispute is settled by a *panchayat.*

Bohu bohu is an enjoyable game. It appeared to be no more than an ordinary village amusement when we were children. Its symbolic character became more evident as we grew older. Both boys and girls participate in the game. The bride and the groom are chosen first. Others take on the roles of mother-in-law, father-in-law, sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law.

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The game starts with the marriage of the boy and girl. The rituals associated with a marriage are faithfully carried out. Coconut shells are used as utensils and dust as rice. The feast is held and the bride and the groom come home. The smallest details are accurately duplicated, from the ceremonial bath at dawn, the decoration of the wedding pavilion with auspicious designs painted with white paste made from rice, the lighting of a votive lamp beneath the sacred basil bush in the evening and retirement for the night. There was a chit of girl named Gouri. She was an expert in playing out the role of the bride. I played the part of the groom several times. I also played the role of a brother-in-law once and was slapped by her at the time. The younger brother of the bride was being married. The old mother-in-law had died and Gouri was the mistress of the house. She inflicted all sorts of punishing tasks on the younger brother's wife, the Bohu. Gouri was quick at repartee and had a ready wit. She was good at teasing and could start a quarrel over a palm frond. A special feature of this game was the re-enacting of village happenings. It was played during the leisurely noon hours, usually in a house where space was available in a room or on the porch. A few kids took a keen interest in the game. I was one of them. The game was often played out of sight, unobtrusively. It was not always easy to find a suitable place or get everybody together. Once it started, the game went on for a few hours. Incidents witnessed in one's own or others' homes were added to the action. Children are keen observers and nothing that took place in the village escaped their attention. They were quick with their sympathies and easily moved to compassion. The daughter of the village washerman was expecting a child. She had come to her parents for the delivery, as was the custom. One day she went to fetch the laundry from the house of a high caste Bajpai. His son spoke cheekily to her. The washerman's daughter appealed to the lady of the house. One day Gouri acted out, in the role of the mother-in-law, what the boy's father and mother had said to the washerman's daughter. You should have seen everybody's smiles. I myself was the bride's father-in-law that day. Gouri was the mother-in-law. The game of bohu bohu revolved around things like that. It's amazing to realize now how deep an impression is made on the minds of the young without knowing it by childhood incidents. Freud would have made a song and dance out of it and exposed the nucleus of his theories if he had been told of it. The most trivial occurrences in the playroom become treasured memories.

Ram Lila was a different kind of game. The patron deity of our village is Gopinath. Once a year he is taken on a twenty-one day outing known as the sandalwood excursion. His temple is at the east end of the village.

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There is a pool beside it. It is called the sand pool because the spring at its bottom is covered with sand. Gopinath sets out on his journey in the afternoon after partaking of food at every house in the village. Gopinath then proceeds westwards, to a large lake, the Sandalwood lake. Boats were roped together and planks laid across them to make a stage. The stage setting is a replica of a temple. Gopinath is given a boat ride. Young dancers accompany him and perform on the stage. After his excursion by boat, Gopinath returns to the sandalwood temple and bathes in the pool beside it. The image of Gopinath is made of brass alloy. He is large and heavy. His companion Radha is likewise and very shapely. Who knows since when these deities have been worshipped in the village! Gopinath disports himself in the waters of the lake along with Radha until the sandalwood paste is ready. He is anointed all over with the paste after that. Flower decoration takes place. Gopinath goes out on the boat again for an excursion by night after the *aarti* and the evening meal. The night is coming to an end when he returns to the temple. I used to go to sleep, asking to be woken up when the deity arrived. One of my aunts, whom others called Mani, used to wake me. There were dancing and performances of mime wherever the deity's car stopped on its return journey. Our house was one of the chosen places where the car stopped. When the procession halted in front of our house, I always got a good view of the show. The attraction of it made me get up everyday at the appointed hour. Residents of the village took turns in providing the food offerings at the Sandalwood temple. The twenty one days of the celebration were allotted among them. The concerned resident came forward with food and flowers when his turn came. Earlier, the turn used to come only once. This has now extended to more than one family per day with increase in the number of families. The lavishness and elegance of the provisions depended on the family's affluence. A drama or musical play often takes place late at night in which the deity himself is depicted in a light sportive mood. *Jatras* were staged on the main road facing the donor's house. *Aarti* is hurried through and the evening meal taken early on such occasions. People come from the countryside and gather. People who lived at the two extremes of the village, the high caste and the low, the *pradhans* and the *bauris*, all came. So did the washermen's families. People came from other villages too. Kinsmen were invited as guests on certain days. *Jatras* were held every year. People awaited the performances eagerly. Most guests were invited on the eighteenth day of the celebrations. It was the turn for my mother's people. They were known as a pious initiated family. They had set aside land to take care of the expenses of the *jatra*. The fifth and

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the eighteenth days of the sandalwood festival or the *chandan jatra* belonged to them. The festivities of the second day were greater than those of the first day. People came from far and near to see the *jatra* on the eighteenth day. Three to four troupes performed. Elderly people took part in dancing. Other families also engaged *jatra* troupes every year on the days allotted to them. A few families organised jatras less frequently. It was a symbol of aristocracy in the village. The turn of our family came on the ninth day. We had no intention of flaunting our wealth. But I was present from the beginning till the end everyday the jatras were held. I stayed awake throughout the night. It was easy to get permission from the elders. Mother had to attend on the fifth and the eighteenth days since her family was in charge on those two days. I used to accompany her. My father's sister asked permission for me on the other days. My father had five sisters. Two lived in Ganjam after marriage. The youngest, Neela Didi, had married in Ramchandrapur. One of the other two was widowed in childhood. She was the third sister. Her name was Mani. She lived with us. Her husband had died even before she had returned to his family after marriage. She had always taken care of me in my childhood. It was to her that I carried my childish complaints and demands. When I think about my childhood, I recall that my relationship with her was far deeper and more intimate than my relationship with my mother. To say it was deep and close is not correct. It was total. She was in complete charge of me. She massaged me with a mixture of turmeric and oil before my bath, saw me to school, put me to sleep, lay beside me to comfort and pet me. She was, in a way, the *de facto* head of the family. My father was away most of the time. When I was a child, he was the Oriya Pandit at the Harachandi Sahi Minor School in Puri. Later, he was sent to Basudevpur, Soro and other places in Balasore and became an assistant sub-inspector of schools. From there he was transferred to the princely states of Boudh, Pallahara, etc. In 1915, he was sent to introduce the teaching of Oriya at the Chaibasa District School, Singhbhum. Father came home to the village in holidays only. His elder brother worked as a copyist in Puri. He came home on Saturday nights returning to Puri on Monday mornings. There was another brother, elder than my father, who had passed away. His son was younger than I was. There was practically no man in the house who could look after the affairs of the family. Mani didi was the eldest of the women. She was also older than my father and his brothers. The only other women were my mother and my uncle's widow. Mani didi thus was the head of the family and was accorded the position of an eldest son. I was the eldest son. Mani Didi took me into her lap at my birth. I was denied

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my mother's care although she nursed me. Mani didi's affection is the tenderest memory I have of my infancy. She looked after me tenderly and saw to all my wants. But she was totally incapable of disciplining me and my mother did not have the courage to attempt it in my aunt's presence. My father and his brothers were not at home very often to take me to task. If Mani didi permitted me to see a *jatra*, I needed no further permission. I saw all the *jatras* during the sandalwood festival. The stories were all taken from the Ramayana. The Slaying of King Kamsa and the *Gopilila* dance of the Gopis were the additional attractions on the eighteenth day. I usually went to the *Ramlila* instead. Different phases of the Ramayana like the Stringing of the Bow (Dhanubhanga), the Forest Exile (Banabasa), the Sacking of Lanka (Lankadahan), the Horse Sacrifice (Ashwamedha), etc. were enacted on different days. The troupes were paid three rupees per night. The *jatra* players arrived in the evening with their equipment. They were given their evening meals from the food offerings made at the temple. Oil for the torches was supplied by the person whose turn it was to provide for the *jatra*. Mats of coconut fronds were spread for distinguished guests. Others sat on the bare ground. Men acted the parts of women. Ravana, Suparnakha, Maricha and Jatayu wore masks. Dasaratha had a crown. Vasistha had a beard and matted hair. A tail dangled behind Hanuman's mask. The golden deer wore a deerskin on its back. Mandodari and Manthara interested me less than Rama, Laxman and Sita. The troupe that had the best actors in these roles was the most in demand. We boys repeated the performances in our games in the backyards after the sandalwood festival was over. Sometimes, we were joined by elderly ladies who helped us by guiding us. There was no set procedure. Everyone declaimed their parts as best as they could, in prose. If anyone was able to express himself in a song, the performance was considered a major accomplishment. 'I, Hanuman, have come to set Lanka aflame'. Games of this sort were not played in other villages. Our village was famous for the sandalwood festival, just as Bira Narasingpur was famous for *shital shasthi*, Bira Ramachandrapur was noted for *champak dwadasi* and Sri Ramachandrapur was known for the *saranti somabar*. *Jatras* were not held during festivities in the other villages. But they were a regular feature in our village and our games drew inspiration from them. This is no longer the case. The glamour has faded. *Jatras* have lost their popularity. Families display their eminence in other ways.

*Kabaadi* was rarely played in the village. A great deal of space is needed for the game. The game was chiefly played in those villages which had wide open spaces. Our village was one long street. Open spaces were not there.

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Game equipment kept in the house consisted only of *cowries.* The women and girls of the family played sometime after lunch. A boy or man who participated in this game was called effeminate and teased. Playing cards were kept in some houses too. Card games were played secretly, without the knowledge of the elders. When a group of boys met to study at the house of one of their number, they often took the opportunity to play. Now a days, games of carrom, ludo and cards are played in every house. There's no ban on them. Older people even join youngsters sometimes. Chess is considered to be aristocratic. We never even heard the names of these games when we were children. Cards had to be indulged in furtively.

The very young played the game of tigers and goats. There were two players. Lines were drawn on the ground with chalks and the game continued with the help of small stones. It was a kind of village ludo. Bridge and rummy had never been heard of, much less played. Cards were disapproved so strongly that boys caught playing were severely punished at the Satyabadi Forest School. Strange are the ways times change!

Older people played two other games. *Ganjapa* was the game of young idlers. Round cards were painted with different scenes. There were only two sets of cards in the village. A long time was needed to play a hand. Spectators crowded around players. Village elders often disapproved of the game, declaring that ganjapa created trouble among kinsmen. Perhaps it did. Families whose families were addicted to the game were poor; lacking even the water rice is boiled in. Yet their recklessness was unrestrained. A few coconut trees were sufficient to meet their common needs. If there was some land, the tenant presented half the crop of paddy. A gourd or a pumpkin was also received occasionally at festival time. Straw was provided for thatching the roof and the labour was free. A brahmin boy did not work in the fields himself or thresh grains. The prestige of a brahmin family was enhanced by the idleness of its young men. One had to go out to the fields early in the morning to attend to their daily ablutions. The problem of firewood was solved if he came across a withered palm frond. If a coconut was blown down in a wild gust of wind, the person who found it kept it whoever the palm's owner may be. Those who were clever went out early. Then they bathed, bowed to the village god and poured a libation over the *lingam* of *Shiva*, coming home at noon. Daily divine services were obligatory in every house. They were time-consuming. Flowers and sandalwood were needed. If for any reason these were not forthcoming, a small quantity of unhusked rice was substituted.

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Alternatives were always available in urgent situations. Brahmins have maintained their traditional practices on that basis. The daily divine services were terminated with food offerings. The prestige of a householder was judged by the ability of the wife to provide the family deity with a good quality of rice. The ceremony of the food offering could, however, be performed with *chuda* (flattened rice) or a small quantity of coarse rice if fine rice was not available. Trouble came when even that was not available. An empty stomach grumbled. But it was definite that hunger followed food offerings. These two depended on each other and went together. Ganjapa had been invented to pass the long, workless hours after the daily chores were attended to. The inventor was certainly farsighted. Why were the young men in the village criticized for having recourse to it? Who knew? Mani Mishra had a grocery store in the center of the village. He enjoyed not a little esteem. When I look back now, I realize that his capital was probably not more than five rupees. Customers collected at his store early in the morning. Those who had little to spend or wanted to make purchases on credit addressed him ingratiatingly as Chintamani Mishra or Mani Bhaina or Chinta Kakei according to the amount they required on credit. The shop was closed during the noon hours, opening again in the evening. There was nothing to do outside the business hours. What would Mishra have done without the help of Ganjapa? Games started on his porch around midday and went on till evening. Everyone kept their eyes on the cards with rapt attention the way herons watched water. We children never set foot near them. Ganjapa is not played any more in the villages although I have occasionally seen a game warming up in Puri. The game is no longer played but it has retained its fascination in other ways. The colours on the round cards are bright and the scenes depicted attract attention. Ganjapa cards are being used currently both in India and abroad to put under water glasses on polished table tops. Having them is an indication of cultivated taste. The popularity of the cards has grown as the currents of fashion spread. Urban manners are imitated in the villages. Again, when the tide turned, village products are appreciated in the cities. While the brass bangles of farmers' wives are found in elegant American homes, plastic bracelets from Tokyo add to the attraction of village belles. As the frog told the frog woman, the earth changes from one moment to the other.

In affluent families, people over fifty played dice. It was another facet of aristocracy in the village. They believed that they had about another ten years to live. They needed friends outside to enliven their idle lives. Companions appeared quickly when there was a feast. But making

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arrangement for food was labourious and expensive. And people were always ready for a game of dice. There was haughtiness about the game and it was addictive. A man is rapturous as he rolls his dice and calls for the number he is in need of. He tries to upset his opponent with a piercing look or a wrinkle of his nose. Whether the dice turns in his favour or not is not material. The game was played on a raised platform in Balabhadra Mahapatra's house, opposite ours. Such platforms were made whenever there was a family ceremony such as a marriage or a thread ceremony. The platform was usually demolished when the ceremony was over. But the platform was a permanent structure at Balabhadra Mahapatra's house. It was made of bricks and there was a thatch over it. Balabhadra Mahapatra's elder brother was dead. The two brothers had married Manika and Nishamani, the two daughters of Balakrishna Choudhury of Bhingarpur. The brahmins of our village were *Kulins* and the village ranks very high among the brahmin *Sasanas* of Puri district. The Choudhurys of Bhingarpur had a lower status. Marriage with them was not permitted in the brahmin *Sasanas*. It was against the rules of acceptable conduct even to partake of rice in their houses. Brahmins of our village rose and left a feast without washing their hands at which a Choudhury sat down. They wore sacred threads on their shoulders. But a brahmin of lower status could never come up to the position of a brahmin of higher status. Class distinctions were clear cut. A slight improvement was possible if the Gajapati Maharaja of Puri tied a sari on their head and the *Mukti Mandap* of the Jagannath Temple of Puri accorded their approval. But equality on the highest level remained out of reach. However, equality might come if they could pull someone down to their level. The brahmins of our village were proud and arrogant, but poor. The Choudhury family was wealthy. Their wealth was spoken of with approbation in the districts of Puri and Cuttack. They owned buildings in many of India's places of pilgrimage. They had houses in Puri, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Prayag and Mathura. Their Bhingarpur residence was set amidst gardens. They had a large family. The family owned lands consecrated to Gopinath in the village and a temple at Bakreswar. One of the brothers had a private zoo and kept tigers and bears in it. Their land holdings were spread over a large area. They were esteemed because of their wealth. The Choudhurys outdid even *Kulin* brahmins in their observance of religious festivals and performance of social festivities. They had engaged a large number of people to do their bidding. All they lacked was the badge of caste. Prominent people desired two other things at the time apart from wealth. A few solicited a title of honour from the government. It would not be

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correct to use the expression of title of honour. They aspired for some sort of official favour. These people exerted themselves to obtain recommendations from sub-divisional officers and district magistrates. They made donations and gave gifts. A title, even the title of Rai Saheb, delighted them. Those who cared more for social status courted the favour of their local society in order to raise their caste status. Donations were also needed for that. There are many sub-castes among the brahmins just as there are among *kayasthas* and *kshatriyas*. The Choudhury family had been trying to raise their caste status for years. Kinship with a high caste brahmin from Puri could do it for them. The two brothers, Jagannath and Balabhadra Mahapatra, were of the very best brahmin lineage but they were extremely poor. Balakrishna Choudhury sent them an offer through a messenger. He offered them land, a house and the money required to perform all religious rites round the year. In short, he gave them the assurance that they need not worry about keeping their families in a manner approved by caste and custom, in comfort. They would become the most prosperous family in the village, without any effort on their part, if only they agreed to marry the two Choudhury girls. The wiles of the goddess of fortune, Lakshmi, won over cast pride. The two Mahapatra brothers set out for Bhingarpur, returning in great style with their brides. Palanquins, ox carts, hackney carriages followed, laden with rich gifts. The village was thrilled. But places were not laid for them when the villagers dined and kinsmen turned their faces away. They had married beneath them. The Choudhury family was disdainfully referred to as '*ada*' or 'ginger' in the way Bhikari Mishra's family in Markandeswar Sahi at Puri was deferentially referred to as '*duba*' or 'grass'. At some time in the past their ancestors had dealt in ginger and they began to be referred to as ginger men slightingly by the *Kulins*. Balakrishna Choudhury knew that friendship often followed initial enmity. He had inserted a finger in the pie and he wanted to push an arm in after it. He built a five room house for the Mahapatras soon after the marriage. A platform was made in front and a thatched roof was put over it to shade it from the sun and the rain. It was just right for a dice game. Balabhadra would rub his eyes and leave his noon hour siesta after lunch, take up the dice board and a casket of *paan* and proceed to the shaded platform. Others arrived at his bidding. The odour of ginger quickly evaporates, blown away by the gift of clothes and a fat cash donation to Gopinath. The kinsmen returned to festivals and feasts organized by the Mahapatras. People crowded to the Mahapatras. A game of dice became a daily ritual. Visitors from outside the village found accommodation as a guest in Mahapatra's house. Dice players were

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considered wise people. Spectators sat on the platform. We children sat below, on the ground. We did not understand the game. We watched the crowd and listened to the derogatory gossip and the general hubbub. The game is played at the other end of the village also, at the Dikshits. The Dikshits were the richest family in the village. They spent a large amount of money on intoxicants like *bhaang* and opium. Dikshit had yeld a *yajna*. They were considered among the chaste once the oblation was over. They became rich. Their porch was built of stone and the walls of their house had been whitewashed. There was a row of large storage bins behind the house. The dice game was played on the front porch. The gathering was quite good. However, no games were played on Thursdays. Dice was also played at the Nandas. Their house was in the centre of the village. But Chintamani Mishra's ganjapa sessions held sway and dice did not attract much attention at the Nandas. Mischief also went hand in hand with the game. The Nanda family prospered in the next twenty five years. Their coconut and rice business flourished. The fortunes of the Dikshits declined. They managed for a time by selling off their land. And Balabhadra Mahapatra was ruined by his wife's wealth. Both families were dragged down into disaster by their dice playing. The game was given up as a noose fell over the family's descendants.

Neither ganjapa nor dice is played in the village any longer. Neither do the children play *Bohu Bohu* or *Bohu Chori*. A *khunti* means a cement pillar as far as the boys of the village are concerned. *Khunti Khunti* as played at the base of the coconut trees is forgotten. Theatrical performances are held in the village not more than once or twice a year. A *jatra* is a rarity, sometimes seen during the sandalwood festival. Young people are not interested in them. The cinema occupies their attention. Who will play the *Ramlila* games? A few *cowries* can still be found in some houses. That's a lot. Newly married couples seldom play *cowrie* games on the night of the nuptial. Cowries were played when the groom was twelve and the bride was nine. Brides and bridegrooms are grown up people now. They are able to defeat their elders at the game now.

Cards are the only game still played in the village. I was never good at cards. All my games are over.

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# Our Village

My grandchildren have never set foot in our village. Yet they speak of it as our home. A city can never be a home. People speak of their neighbourhood or their street as their own. In a village, relationships are close and very personal. Materialistic concerns override people in a city. A bowl of watered rice is immediately put before you when you meet your mother after a long gap. A hand lifted in greeting is enough when you run into your nurse some time. I have been away from our village for forty years. I have been residing at Cuttack all these years. Yet the words 'our village' appear automatically on paper as I sit down to write.

The Jagannath *sadak* goes to Puri in front of the Satyabadi police Station. The name of the state highway no. 6 has been changed. When I was a child it was a red gravel track. Now it has turned black, the black of pitch. It glitters in the sun. A day may come when the black would change to white when roads are made of concrete. The colour of our roads changes with the changing social patterns of village life. Our village, Biswanathpur, is located about a mile down a gravel road after turning eastward on the Jagannath sadak. Jaipur, Dhobasahi and Koshaleswar lie on the way. The road runs mostly through rice fields. There is a '*nayanajodi*' on the right at intervals. A '*nayanajodi*' is a stagnant muddy pond coated with a film of hyacinth. It's named much the same way as a blind child is called a lotus-eyed boy. The village had no distinguishing features. It was a brahmin *Sasan* like any other brahmin *Sasan* around Puri. If anything, it was small by comparison. Of course, it was more.conservative than the others. The Gajapati Maharaja of Puri had established sixteen residential villages exclusively for brahmins and these were called *Sasans*. Each *Sasan* was given a tax-free tract of land to relieve the brahmins who lived there of

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material worry. They performed their priestly office, studied theology and acted as teachers to meet most of their expenses. Those who could write put their thoughts down on palm leaves, in Sanskrit and Oriya. Every *Sasan* had at least two temples at opposite end of the village and the temples had pools beside them. *Sasans* of this type were called '*Bihan*'. The 'B' stood for Biswanathpur, 'h' for Harekrishnapur and 'n' stood for Narsinghpur. The word '*Bihan*' means seed. These three villages claimed a special precedence among the *Sasans*. They were regarded as seed or seminal. Their ways were known. People were annoyed if a brahmin village was not spoken of as a *Sasan*. The inhabitants of the village were proud of their ancestors. Sanskrit was neither studied nor spoken. Kusei Rath was the only pandit in the whole village who concerned himself with learning. He introduced himself as Pandit Krishna Chandra Rath Sharma although no one considered him a proper pandit. He would seat himself on the porch of his house with his books in front of him. In the evenings, he gave readings from the *Puranas* at the Gopinath temple. He never indulged in gossip or scandal-mongering. Once a day he threw a shawl around his shoulders and went to the Satyabadi bazar, returning well before dark after making rounds of the *thana*, railway station, post office, dispensary and the office of the Sakhigopal temple. He received a gift of money everywhere because he was a man of learning. He consulted the almanac and tendered advice about the best times to perform certain ceremonies and auspicious dates. Others in his age group sometimes passed offensive remarks about Kusei openly but he was a genial soul and never took umbrage. He was very fond of me. He sent for me often and told me stories from the *Puranas*. The younger villagers kept their distance from him because of the open aversion showed towards him by the elders. Kusei may have felt affection for me because he found me different. Ours was the only house he visited. He usually came when my father was at home. My father's elder brother paid no attention to him.

Madhav Mishra was older than Kusei. He did not introduce himself as a pandit and no one called him one. No amount of pleading or begging could extract a blessing from him. He had enough to live on. It was from Madhav Mishra that I learned of the existence of a book in Sanskrit called Naishadha. I remembered him often as I learned more and more about that book. A crowd gathered quickly when he sat down to recite slokas. Many were attracted by his voice and manner, the way snakes are said to come out of their holes when the serpent mantra is chanted. Madhav would start intoning slokas after the evening services and keep at it until his wife called him in for his evening meal. In appearance he was the

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opposite of Kusei, being fair, with scanty hair, devoid of arrogance, soft and round. He was respected even though he might not be loved. The pride of the *Sasan* was its caste and its greatest asset was its learning. Caste was hereditary but learning could be acquired with a little effort.

The love for and cultivation of Sanskrit had almost disappeared by the beginning of the twentieth century. It had started diminishing steadily from the onset of the nineteenth century. Sanskrit books were packed away in boxes and left to gather dust on the storage platforms suspended from the ceilings. The glory had faded. But pride in one's lineage remained as great as ever, undiminished by the passage of time.

The residents of the village are all brahmin. They are known as *Sasan* brahmins. Their surnames are Mahapatra, Rath, Mishra and Nanda. The Raths and the Bajpeis rank highest. The Mahapatras came next. Mishras and Nandas followed them. We, Mahapatras belong to the second category. There were three Bajpei families in all. The Mahapatras were six. The Bajpeis never partake of rice in any house other than their own. The Mahapatras too confined themselves to their kinsmen. An exception was made only in case of partaking of *mahaprasad* of Lord Jagannath of Puri. Partaking of food other than rice was also permitted to some extent in the village. Others came to dine when invited by the Bajpeis or Mahapatras as a mark of respect. Rules of this sort were strictly observed in my childhood. Even children knew that and took pride in their lineage. All brahmin *Sasans* were the same in this regard. The choice of a bride or groom was restricted to families of approved status. The lineage of a family had priority. Affluence was a secondary consideration. Nearly all the brahmins were impenicuous. The longer a man could maintain the prestige of his caste, the greater he was esteemed. All the rules of caste were observed as long as the family needs were met from land and farm products. The philosophy upon which this way of life rested was individualistic as in the west. A common standard of conduct existed which was suited to the aspirations of the individual. Equality was maintained in the proud practice of religion. Other aspects of life were secondary. In this context, the horizons of the villagers were naturally limited. There were many in the *Sasan* who had never been outside of it, not even as far as Satyabadi or Puri. A few had made the trip to Puri once in their lifetime. Such people were content with the lives they led in the *Sasan*. They had no need for or interest in anything outside. Their needs were few. Many people managed with a single piece of *dhoti* and a *gamchha*. They washed the *dhoti* when they bathed and hung it out to dry wearing only a thin *gamchha*. The *gamchha* dried on their bodies. The *dhoti* too did not take very long to dry.

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They performed the daily divine services wearing the *gamchha*, ate their meals and attended to other daily chores. They changed when the *dhoti* dried out and continued with it until bath time the following day. There was no diffidence or embarrassment about this arrangement. A few coconut trees and a share of the rice crop from a small plot of land were considered sufficient provision for such modest needs. A girl was given in marriage or a boy took a wife with the general consent of everybody concerned, in accordance with the village custom, within one's own caste, without defiling its purity. A life within the accepted limits was sought and approved. Traditions died down gradually with very little scholarly activities going around. Only the dry habiliments remain, like the cast-off skin of a serpent, marked with the insignia of caste. The greatness of the lineage was maintained as long as emphasis was placed on scholarly learning and the discipline of religion. Everything started crumbling in their absence. Ostentatious outward display has now taken their place in the minds of the villagers. A genuine sense of propriety has been lost.

The village was built along a straight line running from the west to the east. The Tarini temple was at the entrance. Next to it stood the temple of Mahadev. The main temple came next. Gopinath was the chief deity of the *Sasan*. The village proper started from his temple. The sand pool was to the temple's right. The main road led off from there. It was wide enough for two bullock carts coming from opposite directions to pass each other without discomfort. Rows of close set houses lined both sides of the road. Our house was in the row on the south side. All the houses were of the same standard size, consisting of a single room twelve feet square. Householders owned equal plots of land beside the road and behind their houses also, as far as the sand pool. Those who lived on the south side were forbidden to extend their holdings northward and those whose houses were on the north side were forbidden to extend their holdings southward. The *Sasan* was planned in a masterly way. Houses in both rows were kept in line and the gravelled area in front was never encroached upon. This arrangement still holds good. The spaciousness of the village has been preserved by way of an inviolable tradition. One would not be punished if he violated the rule; he would be maligned. There was glory in observing the rule. It is an arrangement that has kept the people of the *Sasan* in line for centuries. The *Sasans* were planned according to rules laid down in the *shastras*. The boundaries were well-marked. Temples and pools on the west and the east checked expansion in those directions too. The temple of Mahadev, Harchandi Devi, and the sandalwood lake were situated on the east. The crematorium also lay on the east.

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Every house had an open courtyard in front and back. The backyard terminated in a pond or a water reservoir.

When the village was being built, two well-defined plots of land were dug up to supply the clay with which the houses were to be walled. The two plots became two pools in due course. A bridge at the eastern end of the *Sasan* linked them together. This was the manner in which the problem of water supply for the village was solved. Two communities or *bustees* were established close to the *Sasan* but carefully separated from it. Agricultural labourers occupied them. They were Basudevpur and Panibhandar. Washermen, barbers and *bauris* who climbed the palms to harvest coconuts, and others who did menial work in the *Sasan* were also assigned separate residential areas. Weavers, oilmen, potters, iron mongers and goldsmiths lived in scattered settlements so situated the inhabitants could work in several *Sasans*. This arrangement owed its origin to a policy that fostered self-sufficiency in the villages, a policy that reverberated through the third decade of the twentieth century and was part of Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. He called on the people to meet their own needs by the work of their hands, to use huskers, small oil presses and spin. It was the way they could protect themselves from dependence upon the favours of outsiders.

There were two other important aspects of life in the *Sasans*. The lands given by the rajas were tax-free and no taxes had to be paid. Other land that was made available to the villagers was *tanki bahel* which meant the rent was nominal, a rupee an acre. The responsibility for realizing the land cess on land acquired subsequently belonged to the village as a whole, and not individually, from the dues of the land owner as determined at the time of the land settlement. In course of time, the zemindar became responsible for collecting the government taxes. The villagers handed over to him whatever dues they themselves collected. It was the collective responsibility of all the villagers to collect land cess individually from each person according to the size of his holding. The villagers selected one of their members to look after this work for a year or two. The elected person submitted accounts to a general meeting of the villagers. The properties vested in the local deities were administered in this way also. A single individual was responsible for all this as also to maintain religious services and conduct festivals for a period of one or two years. All the villagers were registered custodians of the properties of the deities. This simple form of democracy has existed in the *Sasans* for centuries. The *Sasan* system of administration was founded in olden times to assure the productive activities of the village civilization of India. The nature and quantity of

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village productivity changed when this system broke down, shattering the economy. Waves of Mughal, Marathi and British administrators swept over the countryside one after the other and the traditional village setup broke down. Nothing was left for the people to cling to except caste pride. This was the situation at the time of my birth in the early years of the twentieth century.

Sanskrit had disappeared totally. English education was remote. Oriya was practically irrelevant. Only four people in my village were literate. My father, Kasinath Mahapatra, walked the fifty miles to Cuttack to study in the Normal Training School there. After completing studies there, he became the odia pandit at the Middle Vernacular School of Harachandi Sahi in Puri. I've been told his salary was twelve rupees a month. He learned some English subsequently by his own efforts, and became the most highly educated man in the village. He was the first to go to Cuttack to study. There was no railway and he could not afford a bullock cart. Madhusudan Rao was the headmaster of the Cuttack Training School at the time. The school has grown and grown. It's now a training college of the highest order. My father created a sensation in the village in another matter also. He cut off the long lock of hair on the back of his head when he came home on vacation. His father was furious and what he did was decried by others also. People began to call him a baldheaded goat, *landa* Kashi. But within ten years half of the villagers were imitating him. I have never seen anyone less than forty with a knotted lock of long hair hanging at the back of his head. The fashion is changing now. The hair of both men and boys is allowed to grow thick and heavy. My father created a tremendous stir in the village in a third matter also. He took his family to his place of work, Puri. The family consisted of mother, aunt Mani and myself. We set up house in a small thatched cottage in Kundheibenta Sahi. The rent was one rupee per month. There was a well-known mukhtar in Puri at the time. His name was Rama Chandra Dash. He was bearded and sharp-tongued. And he was an ardent patriot. He had a substantial income, and hence, he had no difficulty in spending time and money on social projects for the general good. A few educated, young patriots had joined him to work according to his directions. Prominent among them were Gopabandhu Dash, Nilakantha Dash, Harihar Dash, Basudev Rath, Swapneswar Panigrahy and Dibakar Dash. My father also belonged to the same group. The spread of education, care of the sick and relief work at the time of natural calamities were part of their programme. But their real objective was to bring about social change. Ramachandra's effective leadership took a new shape when his followers donned saffron robes and

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came on the streets with begging bowls, going from house to house singing patriotic songs. This was the forerunner of Utkal Sammilani.

The famous *mukhtar* lived in Puri's Kundheibenta Sahi with his family even though he was a bhingarpur brahmin's son. Village society disapproved of a member of a joint family living outside the *Sasan*, at his place of work, with his family. The reformer mukhtar was a pioneer in this matter and my father followed his example. How much courage was needed to take us to stay with him in Puri is beyond imagination now-a-days. For a young housewife to set foot outside the *Sasan* was unthinkable. The difficulties did not daunt him. The changes that took place in our social life at a later time would not have been possible if my father had not taken this bold step. My father was a staunch brahmin. Daily services were punctually carried out and the rituals observed. He believed in the making of libations to the deities. In spite of it all, he cherished others with a kindly tolerance and sympathetic understanding.

Our sojourn in Puri was temporary. Within a few months, we returned to the *Sasan*. Family reasons made it necessary for us to come back. My grandparents, two elder brothers of my father, their wives, and two of my father's sisters lived in our village home. One of his sisters was widowed in childhood and the other had been abandoned by her husband. We did not have much paddy land. My father had received a coconut grove and a homestead as dowry when he married Swapnabati, the youngest daughter of the digits. The digits ranked very high as brahmins and he got no more than this. It became difficult to meet the expenses of a Puri establishment as well as such a large household in the village. We had to come back.

My grandfather was very old and my grandmother sickly. They were both of short stature. They were fair complexioned and good-looking. Grandfather died not long after our return. Narasingha, my uncle, looked after the paddy fields. He too died young. His wife lived out the rest of her life as a person of ill luck with a baby boy and a girl by her side.

Everybody was afraid of the other elder brother of my father. He was named Damodar and arrogant by nature. He was subject to fits of anger. He would fling away his entire plate for the slightest flaw in cooking. My two aunts were helpless dependents. The one who had been deserted returned to her husband's house after his death. But she too died within a couple of years.

My mother was the youngest of the daughters-in-law and supposed to obey everybody. It was a long time before I even heard her speak. She used to communicate by making soft murmuring sound or by gestures. She had

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to behave in this manner even with the elderly ladies of the neighbouring houses who used to visit us. Ladies of the same age group were not permitted to visit each other. They met only while bathing in the pool behind the house at dawn or carrying pots of water from the pool into the house at dusk.

The younger women in the family kept carefully away from their elder brothers-in-law. They had to be on guard to make sure that even the soft murmuring sound they made would not be audible to the elder male members of the family. Any show of affection, even to one's own children, was considered immodest, even shameless. The whole neighbourhood would hear of it in no time.

I was the eldest male child in the family. A cousin, who was older, was married and had left early. The son and daughter of the younger uncle were very young. The girl died after a brief illness. There was nothing and no one at home to keep me engaged. I had no friends at home. Mother never showed any sign of affection. All my childish problems and demands were carried to aunt Mani. My father was a stranger. His visits to home were occasional and he could not show me more affection than he showed to my uncle's children. He was also, by nature, of a grave and solemn disposition. I was lonely. Loneliness took possession of me which I have had to endure my whole lifelong.

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# Schooling

There was a primary school in the village. I do not recall the teacher's name. He was thin, tall and flat-faced. People did not find his appearance attractive. He slept in the school, spreading a mat of palm frond on the floor. He took classes seated on the mat. His meals were provided by his students in turns. He was invited to every house where a *shraadh* ceremony was held. He went home at the end of every month, taking as much as he was able to save from what had been provided for him and whatever else he could get by asking, returning the evening of the following day. His leave of absence was sanctioned by the person who managed the properties of the deities in the village. His salary was paid from the community funds and he was entitled to a thousand bundles of straw also to thatch his house. It was an arrangement that suited everybody. If there was a birth or death in someone's house, his turn was put off. The holy services of a household deity were also held in abeyance along with the turn of the teacher. One was not permitted to make offerings of rice to a deity at such times. They had to request their neighbours to officiate on their behalf and offer coconut balls, sugarcoated puffed rice and other permissible articles of food to the household god. The neighbours obliged even though they might not be on speaking terms otherwise. Quarrels were deferred until the mourning period was over. This is the practice at the United Nations also. Our village customs were superior in this regard. Opponents extended the hand of friendship of their own accord. The common humanity of the parties was given precedence. The thought seems amusing now. However, the human factor behind this social custom should be analysed. Anarchy would result if a society did not observe the customary rights. All past experiences would be lost and so would the enlightenment added by acquired knowledge.

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Food was served to the teacher with respect even if he was not a brahmin. And he would, with an unperturbed expression, pick up his leaf plate after eating and wipe the place on which his food had been set clean. No servant in any house performed duties of this kind. The barber occasionally helped out with the disposal of the plates after a feast. Sesame oil was supplied to the teacher for his bath by the family who gave him lunch and *punaag* oil for his lamp by the family who gave him his supper. The use of mustard oil was not known those days. Kerosene had never crossed the threshold of our village. Home-made coconut oil was given to the teacher only on the *Sankrantis*. School children would be amused to hear that today. The teacher had to bear his own expenses for *paan* although he received that as an extra.

My uncle took me to the teacher one evening. Neither spoke. They understood each other perfectly. One's responsibilities had come to an end and the other's had begun. A place was shown to me where I was to sit and write with chalk on the earthen floor. I returned home. My lessons were to start the next morning.

"Begin to write," the teacher said, touching my head with the tip of his cane lightly when I offered him the rice, plantains and coconuts I had brought with me early the following morning. The teacher informed me that I was to come both in the morning and afternoon. In the morning I was to be there as early as possible, before he even opened his door. The same rule applied for the afternoon session too. The timings were lax for small kids like me. Once, in the course of a conversation with Parija Saheb (the late Dr. Pranakrushna Parija), he said that, irrespective of the time, the child who arrived first in his school would be greeted only with a gentle touch of the cane on his back. Children who were second, third, etc. were greeted with two, three, etc. lashes of the cane. There was always a rush to be the first across the teacher's threshold. A child who fell in the rush got an extra bit of attention from the cane even though that seemed unfair. But who would argue with the teacher? Or defy him? There were no High Courts to receive writ petitions. However, the teacher was considerate in our school. He did not wield his cane very often. Although the raising of his cane was a blood-chilling experience, I do not remember ever being beaten. There was no studying in the school. All we did was to write on the floor what we had learnt by heart. I still remember the mathematical table I had learnt in that school. Now-a-days, children use a calculator for even simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, not to speak of higher mathematics. The more we enslave

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ourselves to machines, the more we lose our capacity to think for ourselves, becoming less capable of independent thought.

Father joined government service as an assistant sub inspector of schools at Basudevpur in the district of Balasore. He was the first man from our village to become a government servant and his salary was perhaps thirty rupees. The family followed him to his place of work within a few months. The time had come for me to bid farewell to the village school. I was neither pleased nor saddened at the prospect. My memory of our house at Basudevpur is hazy. We had two small rooms in a thatched cottage. The walls were made of clay. The kitchen consisted of a thatched room. In between the house and the kitchen was a small courtyard. There was a door in the boundary wall. We were four: my father, I, my mother and aunt. My father's job was to supervise the primary schools under Basudevpur's jurisdiction. He usually went out early in the morning and came home late in the afternoon or evening. Sometimes he was away for a day or two. I do not know exactly how much we were able to send home to the village or how much it cost us to live there. We had to be economical. Father moved around on foot. There was no cycle. He never took a bus or travelled by train. Not even the lowest paid government employee today would imagine anything like that.

I clearly remember an incident from that time. Father's boss, the sub-inspector, was a mohammedan. He was very slender. He and his wife lived in a thatched cottage not far from ours. Father would pay him a visit now and then. Sometimes I went with him. Once I saw some twigs lying in his room that had been used for brushing teeth. We always threw twigs after using them once. He used them again and again the way toothbrushes are used these days. I've never seen such use of twigs anywhere else. The use of chewed twigs more than once may have been the custom somewhere, I don't know, and the toothbrush might have been invented following that. *Mian saheb* would have welcomed the invention of the toothbrush. The memory of those chewed twigs came back to me when I purchased my first toothbrush eighteen years later. I was an M.A. student at the time. Any mention of Basudevpur makes my heart ache. I come across references to it in the newspapers frequently these days. It has now become the constituency of famous men in public life. Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab and Shri Nilamani Routray had once contested the polls from Basudevpur. My link with the place seems unbroken. The memories that surface from our subconscious mind have a special intensity.

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Father was transferred from Basudevpur to Soro. At Soro, we lived in a house with a garden. There was a pond in the garden. A wooden gate opened on to the road. I used to swing back and forth on the gate. Now there is a library commemorating the poet Radhanath Ray there. I visited the library a few years ago as the chief guest on the occasion of the birthday celebrations of the poet. The president of the ceremony was Shri Nanda Kishore Das, a Sarvodaya leader and the former Speaker. In his welcome speech, he referred to my childhood connection with the house. In my mind, I was looking for the garden gate.

I went to the primary school in Basudevpur. The school children sat on benches in Soro. For the first time in my life I too was seated on a bench. The floor was cemented. I thought of the children in my village school, seated on the floor, writing on it in chalk. Pride, small or great, goes before a fall. Father was transferred to the princely kingdom of Boudh. Puri, Cuttack and Balasore were considered to be under Mughal rule. The sub-inspector and the assistant sub-inspector of schools were supervised by a district deputy inspector in these areas. An inspector had charge of them all. The administration in the princely kingdom was different from that in the areas that were under Mughal rule. The wishes of the ruler were paramount. The schools were supervised by an agency inspector. The royal horses and elephants were placed at his disposal whenever he came on a visit. His subordinates were put to a great deal of trouble whenever they had to make a visit. They had to cross forests and hills in order to inspect a mere handful of primary schools. People who lived in areas which had been under the Mughal rule looked down upon those who lived in the small monarchies. But one could not be choosey in regard to his employment. It was decided that the family would return to the village while my father would acquaint himself with the situation in his new place of work. My memory of our farewell to Soro is that of a soda water bottle. The glass stopper was pushed in with the help of the tip of an umbrella. The sound and the taste of soda water were a new experience for me.

Our village already had a lower primary school in the meantime. The teacher of the earlier school was about to pack up. The village elders and the students were indifferent to its fate and it had gone into decline. Father had me admitted to the new school. That was the actual beginning of my formal education. There were two teachers; one head teacher and the other assistant teacher. The head teacher, Shri Nilakantha Mishra, was from Sri Purushottampur. Shri Raghunath Mishra, the assistant teacher,

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was from our village. He was short of hearing but not actually deaf although he was nicknamed *Kala* Raghu. The assistant teacher took the lower classes and the head taught the higher classes. We, the students in the lower classes, sat on mats spread on the floor. The students of higher classes sat on benches. The classes were held in one room, on opposite sides. The teachers talked to each other as they taught. The classes were held in two sessions with a break at noon. The assistant teacher went home for lunch. The head teacher received an allowance from the village fund for his food. He always received a share of the delicacies served at any celebration. He did not have to cook himself on such days. He went to his own village every Saturday, after school, and came back on Monday mornings. He kept his clothes and other things in the school cupboard meant for books. His utensils were on the lower shelf. The hearth was in a corner of the corridor. It was lit by two boys from the senior class, by turns, in the morning. They fetched water, washed the pot and put the rice on to boil. This was their regular duty. In the afternoon, the junior boys cleaned up, removing ashes from the hearth, washing pots and pans. These duties were important adjuncts to the regular curriculum of studies. Drinking water had to be fetched, firewood collected, supplies brought from the shop, and rice processed. The students had to see to all these things.

Another teacher was appointed and the school became an upper primary. His name was Raghunath Mishra too. He was from our village. He was called Raghu Sir. The name stuck to him even after he left the school. The verandah outside the school room was wide and commodious. The senior teacher held court there in the evenings, sitting on a mat. People assembled to hear him. He was a good speaker. Sometimes, he gave readings from books in the library. The senior teacher fostered the teaching of Odia and cultivated its use. Sanskrit had practically disappeared and English had not been introduced. He was a great lover of learning and under his influence the hopes and aspirations of the village took a new turn. Many were benefited. On one occasion, the teacher composed a book of verse after a visit to Bhubaneswar on the occasion of the *Siva Ratri*. It was printed and recited both in the school and outside for a long time. One of my uncles started writing poems in the same style. He was clever and could have become a celebrity if he had lived longer. The senior teacher grew old in the service of the school. I always went to see him when I came home from college in the vacations. He was always pleased to see me. No other pupil of his had got as far as college. He visited me often when I was practicing as a lawyer in Cuttack. His last visit took

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place when I was a judge of the high court. By then he was very old and had lost his eyesight. His son came with him. He groped blindly for my head and said in a quivering voice, "You are a walking stick for me in my sightlessness." I gave him a hundred rupee note. His surprised pleasure was something I shall never forget. His son had come to me after his death. He told me that if anyone showed the old teacher any disrespect or quarrelled with him, he would always retort angrily, saying, "Who cares about you? There's a boy who has become a Judge of the High Court through my blessings."

My stay in the village school was, like my stay in Basudevpur and Soro, of short duration. Oriya was the only language taught in all these schools. Father wanted me to learn English. He knew the importance of learning English from his experience as a government servant and his contacts in urban areas like Puri and Cuttack. In rural areas, people were apathetic to learning English. The chief reason was that English was thought of as inseparable from christianity as Sanskrit was from hinduism. Kalinga or Utkal, as Orissa was known in ancient times, was not always ruled by Odia-speaking kings. Telugu kings from the south also ruled Orissa for a while. But their mother tongue had not been imposed upon the common people of Orissa. The kings had been converted to the language and culture of their subjects. Sanskrit had been adopted as the state language. There were confusions in the fields of education and language with the advent of the Mughals. Royal patronage was given to Arabic and Persian, and many ambitious families tried to get a hold on them. Fluency in Arabic and Persian brought social prestige and, with it, high positions. Sanskrit retreated into obscurity. But Persian and Arabic found no entry into the *Sasans*. The *Sasans* apprehended that their religion would lapse with a change of language. Language was regarded as the repository of their faith. When the British rule was established in Puri in 1803, English was excluded from the villages for the very same reason. It was considered to be the language of base people. People were ready to do without Sanskrit but they were not prepared to accept English. A man was prepared to go without education. But he could not allow his faith to be tampered with. This was the state of affairs for a hundred years. The same attitude had also prevailed during the mughal period. Consequently, the descendants of a people known for their education and wisdom became an illiterate and superstitious mass. For nearly three hundred years they groped in darkness. Fear of smallpox and cholera made them depend upon the superstitious succour of gods and goddesses instead of *Ayurvedic* Science. Study circles wasted their time and attention in idle gossip and

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slander. Quarrels and fights became daily occurrences in the villages. It was not until the close of the nineteenth century that a small group of idealists emerged who, under the leadership of the Mukhtar Ramachandra Das, endeavoured to remedy the situation. The group consisted of a few young men from Puri who had the opportunity to learn English. Gopabandhu Dash of Suando was a pioneer. Sri Gopinath Dash of Ramachandrapur and Nilakantha Dash, Harihar Dash and Baidyanath Dash of Birapratappur were his co-workers. They were all students but had firm convictions. Some of them left the group. Baidyanath Babu became a sub-deputy after graduating. Gopinath Babu joined as a sub-deputy too. But he cooperated with the group to the extent possible. Gopabandhu Babu, Nilakantha Babu and Harihar Dash were unwavering. Their first step was the establishment of the minor school at Satyabadi. That was the beginning of English education in that area. It was there that I was to study. I joined class VII (B) in 1911.

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# Satyabadi School

Satyabadi school was unique from the day it was founded. It was the first school to teach English without any assistance or recognition from the government. The pay of the teachers was much less than the salaries of teachers elsewhere. Satyabadi School was the first educational institution of its kind. Teachers with qualifications far higher than required at a primary level taught there. That in itself was novel, almost unthinkable. Gopabandhu Babu maintained an intimate relationship with a few young men like Nilakantha Dash, Godavarish Mishra, Krupasindhu Mishra, Harihar Dash, Anant Mishra and others while studying in the college. They also studied at the college. Godavarish Babu came from Banpur. Others came from Ramchandrapur near Satyabadi. Gopabandhu himself came from close to Satyabadi, Suando. The suffix 'babu' was added to names those days as a sign of esteem. Those who were good scholars of Sanskrit were addressed as 'Pandits' in accordance with a custom shared by Bengal and Orissa. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, brahmins were addressed as pandits irrespective of their learning. All the rest were Babus. This difference was due to the lack of close contact between the two geographical areas. People from different states were brought together in 1921 with the onset of the non-cooperation movement. Orissa had not been granted separate statehood at the time and the headquarters of the pradesh congress was located at Patna. Congress members of Orissa who were brahmins were addressed as pandits in the footsteps of Bihar. All the slogans to abolish the caste system were just eyewash. On June 26, 1924, the Orissa pradesh congress held a session at Cuttack that was presided over by the famous Prafulla Chandra Ray of Bengal. Gopabandhu Babu arrived in Cuttack the same day, having been just released from the

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Hazaribagh jail. He came to the meeting straight from the railway station and mounted the dais. Prafulla Ray, observing the tumultuous welcome he received, conferred on him the title Utkalmani then and there. Gopabandhu Dash remained the Utkalmani or the Jewel of Utkal for the rest of his life. Other congress leaders were all called Pandits even if some of them like Godavarish Babu and Krupasindhu Hota did not wear the sacred thread. A few like Nilakantha Babu did not subscribe to brahminical rites. The use of pandit as a mode of address remained confined to the district of Puri. Even Biswanath Dash of Ganjam was not addressed as pandit. At no level of the society was it the custom to use pandit as a form of address, even in the Satyabadi school, and neither did congress workers of the lowest rank use it. Officially and unofficially, Gopabandhu and the other teachers at the Satyabadi school were addressed by the honorific 'babu', until the school became a state institution and later closed down.

Gopabandhu and his associates had decided to serve the country through education. A similar project had been inaugurated in Poona under the leadership of Justice Ranade. The Deccan Education Society had been set up there and had become a famous seat of learning. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was one of those who had participated in Ranade's efforts. Ferguson College did not confine its influence to educational circles. It contributed to the national awakening of the country as a whole. Gopabandhu Babu took up the ideals it embodied. He established the *Vishwa Shiksha Samsad* or the Universal Education League. In this, Gopabandhu Babu had forged ahead of Ranade. Satyabadi was chosen as the site of the League's operations. It was a choice without a precedent. A more suitable place could not be found for the pursuit of learning. Satyabadi was situated in a grove of bakul trees behind the temple of Sakhigopal. The beauty of the bakul grove was such that it attracted Lord Krishna himself on his way from Brindavan to Puri. Radha came to him there, as Laxmi, the daughter of a devotee.

Two friends travelled to Mathura and Brindavan from Orissa. One borrowed money from the other and afterwards denied it, deceiving him. The deceived pilgrim appealed for justice to the court of the ruler. And he went to Brindavan, to the deity with the peacock crown, in whose presence he had given money to his former companion. The deity, as eye witness to the transaction, agreed to come and testify on behalf of the plaintiff. They set out for Puri on foot as there were no trains or buses or planes those days. The plaintiff preceded the deity who was his witness. God's grace was granted to those who trust in the Divine.

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"Is your trust in me complete?" the deity asked the devotee. "If you trust me, go in front of me and I shall follow. Do not look back."

Courts of law are the same everywhere. Everyone suspects everyone else. Judges doubt complainants, and complainants doubt judges, and each in turn suspects the witnesses and lawyers. A witness is a witness; be it a two-armed human being or a four-faced Brahma.

The devotee leading the way listened anxiously for the tinkling of the deity's anklets. Nilachal Dham was only a stone's throw away. River Ratnachira came into sight. The musical tinkling of the anklets was no longer audible. The devotee had been deceived by his companion. Was the deity who had consented to be a witness on his behalf also deceitful? In his anxiety he did not realize that the feet might have sunk deep into the sand of the riverbed and the tinkling had been stilled. He turned back, looking behind him.

"Appeal to the court of the king for justice," said Lord Krishna, smiling and gesturing with his flute, "I cannot move." Yamuna was reflected in the waters of Ratnachira. A full-sized statue of Sakhigopal was erected at the place.

Gopabandhu was a devotee of Lord Krishna from his childhood. Every evening, he recited the *Bhagavad Gita* before his house-deity. Accidentally, he received the blessings of *Sakhigopal* for his efforts. The Minor School was established on August 12, 1909 in the dense grove behind the temple of Sakhigopal. It was a long thatched house. The floor was earthen. There were few equipment available. But there was no lack of enthusiasm. Students came from all the surrounding villages lured by the desire to learn English. The school achieved eminence the day Nilakantha Babu joined it after passing M.A. from Calcutta. There were very few people in Orissa at the time that had passed M.A. One could study only up to B.A. at Cuttack. Calcutta was the nearest place to study M.A. But very few families had the resources to take care of the expenses at Calcutta. Law classes (leading to the B.L. degree) had been stopped at Ravenshaw College in Cuttack. The government provided scholarships to those people who wanted to study law at Calcutta. A few took that route to study M.A. Nilakantha Babu, Godavarish Babu and Krupasindhu Babu had taken that route too. They took scholarship to study law. But they sat for M.A. examination in stead of law. A high-ranking job was assured if one passed M.A. But these people were committed to public service. Nilakantha Babu was the first to pass M.A. He joined the school on October 11, 1911. The role of the month of October was providential.

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Gopabandhu was born in October (October 9, 1877). Nilakantha joined the school in October. Gopabandhu started 'The Samaj', the newspaper, in October (October 4, 1911). Radhanath Rath, who was closely involved with the large circulation of 'The Samaj', resigned from his job and took over charge of the Satyabadi press at Satyabadi in October, 1919 (Incidentally, I began writing this autobiography from October 11, 1978).

There was a lot of excitement in the school the day Nilakantha Babu came to the school for the first time. He wore a pant and a coat. He had a turban on his head with golden border. He sported a smart moustache too. All these things were previously unknown. He was the most educated. But he started teaching in the lowest classes. We were in class VII (B). Everyone was enchanted when he took out the pen from his pocket to mark the attendance of students. Ink started flowing automatically to the nib. A fountain pen or a ball pen is commonplace these days. It was not so those days. What impressed us even more than his clothes or pen was his method of teaching. He taught us English. English had to be taught in English. Earlier the meanings of English words were explained to us in Oriya. The new teacher tried to explain the meanings of 'here' and 'there' to us. He came to us from the black board and said, "I am here." Then he went from us to the black board and said, "You are there". He explained the meanings of the two words and the difference between them in several ways. All of us enjoyed the class which was full of merriment. We discussed his clothes, turban, pen and his method of teaching in the recess. We had never seen anyone wearing a pant earlier. We had seen people wearing a turban. But no one wore it the way he had worn his. Nilakantha Babu became our class teacher. He taught us English every day in the first period. The students were highly motivated in his class. People in the surrounding villages were astounded to hear that someone had taken up a job as a teacher at thirty rupees a month after passing M.A. Gopabandhu's magic worked. Gradually, people were inclined to send their children to school.

After Nilakantha Babu came Hari Babu—Harihar Dash. He taught at the Peary Mohan Academy at Cuttack after passing F.A. (equivalent of I.A.). He was extremely popular among students because of his expertise in mathematics and affection for the students. He too was inspired by Gopabandhu and was committed to public service. He left the city and a job that paid well to join the Satyabadi school at a salary of twenty rupees a month. Nilakantha Babu was relatively well-off. His father Ananda Dash was held in high esteem in the village. He thought his son would

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find a cushy job after completing M.A. But things turned out differently. But he was not disenchanted by that. Perhaps he knew instinctively that his son was destined to be Pandit Nilakantha in the future. Hari Babu belonged to a family of Sanskrit pandits of Sriramachandrapur having the title 'Brahma'. He had lost his wife in his youth. He was fair-complexioned. He too sported a moustache. Brahmins from the *Sasans* shaved only on specific days. One was permitted to wear both a moustache and a beard. But one without the other was forbidden. The reformers perhaps wanted to start the reform process with the moustache. Nilakantha Babu wrote an essay titled 'My Moustache' in the magazine *Utkal Patrika* when strong exceptions were taken to his moustache. Nilakantha Babu loved a controversy; Hari Babu always lent a helping hand. One was wise and eloquent in speech; the other was affectionate and soft-spoken. Hari Babu wore a *dhoti* and a *kameez*. He taught mathematics and hygiene in higher classes. He put on a pant and a coat with a green turban on his head if an inspector was to come visiting the school. Who had an inkling that he would be a *Sarvodaya* leader, and the humble and universally admired *Acharya* in future?

The person who followed (May 1, 1913) him had an electrifying effect on the school community. When he laughed, it could be heard fifty yards away. He was extremely fair in complexion; one could see him clearly even in the dark. His dhoti and kameez were sparkling white. He wore a gorgeous moustache. He too had passed M.A. Foregoing a scholarship for higher studies in Britain, he came to fulfill his commitments. He was Godavarish Mishra. He had a unique style in everything he did. Nilakantha Babu and Hari Babu called him by his first name as he was younger to them in years. Classes were already being held under the trees by the time he arrived. Nilakantha Babu was the headmaster. Godavarish Babu was to teach us English. We sat on mats under the tree. The black board hung from the trunk of the tree. A wooden stool was provided for the teacher. Godavarish Babu came, chalk in hand. There were black *chappals* on his feet. He noticed all kinds of problems with the pronunciations of the students before he started to teach. He explained the difference between 'f' and 'v' through the movement of his lips. The lower lip had to be moved behind the upper row of teeth to pronounce 'v' and the lower lip had to be moved to the upper lip to pronounce 'f'. We caught on to him quite fast. I still remember those days. There may be problems with other letters. But I could never forget the difference between 'f' and 'v'. He passed B.T. later to get more training in Education. The Inspector of Schools had once invited him to the Ravenshaw Collegiate School of

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Cuttack to demonstrate how to impart teaching in English. There were more than one person in the Satyabadi school with an M.A. degree. Hence, Nilakantha Babu, Godavarish Babu and Krupasindhu Babu took turns in acting as the headmaster. This had been done at the instance of Gopabandhu Babu.

The school continued to run under the trees. An English inspector visited the school once. It was difficult to recognise Godavarish Babu that day. He was dressed like a pucca sahib. He wore a neck tie and a felt hat. We thought there was another sahib with the inspector. Nilakantha Babu and Hari Babu wore a closed neck coat along with pant. We had never seen anyone wearing a neck tie. We wondered how the neck tie reached the neck with a knot. Godavarish Babu lived in one of the rooms of the temple at the time. He moved to a thatched, earthen house near the marketplace later when his family joined him. The drawing room was wide. I had gone there several times. There was a small table, a wooden chair and a stool in the drawing room. A mat had been spread in a corner too. We sat on it. He too sat with us. Everything was spick and span. The furniture was sparse. But one could sense a difference when one entered the house. Everyone had a drawing room. But this one seemed different. There was a wooden pillar in that room. The chair and table had been placed near the pillar in such a way that the room seemed divided into two parts. All of us had a feeling that his house and way of living were different from the others. Some snack came for him from home during the school hours. The snack consisted of some fried paddy, milk and bananas. But that too arrived in style. No such snack came for any other teacher in the school. The arrangement was quite novel for us. A place was cleared in the Bakul grove to play tennis after he arrived. Later, it was converted into a hard court. Classes were held all around the court. Godavarish Babu and a few other teachers started playing. To put it in brief, a touch of class was added to the drab and rustic exterior of the Satyabadi School after the arrival of Godavarish Babu.

His fame spread for another reason. He created a sensation by practicing hypnotism or mesmerism. A meeting was convened once in the school to display the art. Gopabandhu Babu was there. Many other distinguished people from Puri too had come. They included the *Mahanta Maharaj* of the Emar *Math* (he was prominent among the visitors because of his corpulence), Jagabandhu Singh, Banamali Dash, Dibyasingha Panigrahi, Artatrana Mishra, etc. (all eminent lawyers of the time). The hypnotism was tried on a few boys that included me. I was the guinea pig

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most of the time. I heard later that day that the spectators had burst into laughter when I had pulled at the beard of Gopabandhu Babu taking it to be the branch of a mango tree in my hypnotised state. Many other demonstrations were made. It was not as if there were no pretenders among us. But the show had helped advance the cause of the school.

Godavarish Babu was the show piece of the school for some time. Jennings Sahib, the Director of the Department of Education of the Bihar-Orissa Government, had come to the school once. Godavarish Babu was dressed as a pucca sahib at the time and enthralled him as also the audience by reciting some portions of Shakespeare's Hamlet in dramatic fashion. His English pronunciation and dialogue delivery were impeccable. The fame of the school increased manifold because of him and parents from afar chose to send their children to the Satyabadi School because of this reason.

Krupasindhu Babu came after that in 1914. Krupasindhu Mishra belonged to Birapratappur near Sakhigopal. He too came to the school to work for a meagre salary after passing M.A. from Calcutta. He had sported a moustache and beard from the beginning. He was quite tall. He had a solemn face and he always walked with his head lowered. He wore a dhoti and a coat. He used shoes, socks and a bandage on his calves. His legs got swollen up because of filaria; hence the bandage. But that did not deter him from cycling all the time. He was quiet and said little. He was cast in a different mould from Nilakantha Babu and Godavarish Babu. He was not interested in anything else except studying and teaching. They were three brothers, Harihar, Krushna Chandra and Krupasindhu. His original surname was Dash. But he took on the surname of Mishra as he had been adopted. Once, the play Harischandra had been enacted on behalf of the school on the stage in front of the Sakhigopal Temple. Krupasindhu Babu had acted in the role of Viswamitra. I still remember his angry demeanour while cursing Shaibya. His elder brother Harihar was not a teacher; but he was known to the school community. He had acted in the role of Harischandra. We were all enamoured of his acting. Raghunath Mishra of Samasarapur, who was the head clerk of the school, had acted in the role of *Shaibya*.

Two persons from our village worked as teachers in the school. They were Ramachandra Rath and Gopinath Mishra. Both of them had passed matriculation. Rama Babu belonged to the family of Bajpai samantas. His elder brother and father opposed the ideals of the Satyabadi School like other conservative people. But the opposition had waned as Rama Babu

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contributed something to the family kitty. His family was highly impoverished. His elder brother worked as a temporary priest in the court of the King of Bonai. His younger brother Banamali was my friend and classmate. Pandit Nilakantha Dash had praised Rama Babu in his autobiography and said that poverty and idealism were his constant companions. I have seen him doing several unethical work while keeping accounts and attending to court matters for a coconut merchant of Satyabadi after the school closed down. He did not have an option in the matter. A few people like Rama Babu had to forget their idealism because of the circumstances they found themselves in. I used to provide a bit of financial help to Rama Babu after I started practicing as a lawyer. However, it was clear to see that he was terribly embarassed to receive the money from me. Finally, arrangements were made so that money would reach him without any direct contact between us. That relieved the tension for both of us. It was my misfortune that Rama Babu did not live long. An invaluable life was lost to abject poverty. A library has been established in the village in his memory. That reminds everyone that one could derive satisfaction from serving the nation even when he was as poor as a church mouse.

Gopi Babu, the other teacher from our village, was the headmaster when Satyabadi School was a minor school. He had joined as a teacher as he needed a job. He resigned when he fell ill. His contribution was limited. Other illustrious teachers had not joined the school at the time.

There were two other teachers who were like invisible pillars inside a wall. One was Basu Babu (Basudev Mohapatra) and the other was the Head Pandit (Madhusudan Mishra). Satyabadi School was started when the middle-vernacular school in Sriramachandrapur was moved to Satyabadi. Madhusudan Mishra was the head pandit in that school. He belonged to Sriramachandrapur. He was held in high esteem in the community. He came to Satyabadi from Sriramachandrapur with his inkpot, ink and pen. Everyone in the school respected him right from the beginning. He did not know English. But that did not stop him from asserting on the teachers who taught English. His only job was to teach. He did not bother about social reforms, moustache movement, community dinner, etc. The school could not have run in the initial stages without his help. He too could not have made a living if the school would not have been there. Thus, each needed the other. He left the school because of old age and neglect.

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Basu Babu was a fitness freak. He made sure that the students got enough exercise. He made their life miserable by constantly blowing on his whistle and making them go through several exercises. He made them run a mile at a stretch. He had a lot of strength and time. It never crossed his mind that the children were not as strongly built. He supervised the mess and maintained discipline when the children sat down to eat. He made sure that the boarding room was spick and span. Besides, he took care of the school's work at Puri. He did all the biddings of Nilakantha Babu. It could be seen that he was a selfless worker. The children were scared of him. At a later stage, he became known as Pandit Basudev Mohapatra because of his contributions to Oriya literature.

Banchhanidhi Babu (Mishra) was from Banki. He had passed matriculation. He was of the same age as the pupils in the higher classes of the school. He was lean, tall and athletic. He was the youngest among the teachers. He was friendly with the boys. He was the only teacher who wore a half pant and played football with the boys. Football was played in an open space near the cremation ground on the other side of the railway track, about a mile away from the school. Boys from the upper classes played the game. Some of us studying in the lower classes were spectators. But we waited expectantly to see Banchhanidhi Babu emerge from his hostel room on a bicycle wearing his half pant. Banchhanidhi Babu was also a Kabyatirtha; he taught Sanskrit. Pandit Bhubaneswar Mishra joined later as the Sanskrit teacher. Why were the boys so enamoured of Banchhanidhi Babu? They could not talk as freely with any other teacher. The atmosphere was subdued everywhere—in the school, in the mess and in the gym. Only Banchhanidhi Babu encouraged the boys to have fun and indulge in merrymaking. He could not sustain himself for long at the Satyabadi school. He left in a few days. A few others also wanted release from the forbidding environment. But they neither had an opportunity nor any courage.

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# Bana Vidyalaya

Satyabadi School was more famously known as the Bana Vidyalaya. But it had not been established under the trees in the beginning. It had been started in a long thatched house on August 12, 1909. English education was begun in the Satyabadi area. The area was densely populated. High-caste Brahmins as well as poor people all around realized that their children and grandchildren could now study English. There were a few lower and primary schools in the area. Children's education was over with that. Very few people could afford to send their children to Puri Zilla School. It was almost rare. Few people could afford the expenses at Puri. Hence, Gopabandhu had decided to set up a school at Satyabadi that would impart instruction in English. Children from the nearby villages were day scholars. Children from the far-off places carried rice from home and lived in the hostel at the minimum expense.

The school ran with Madhusudan Mishra as the head pandit, Gopinath Mishra as the headmaster and a few other teachers. Artatrana Mishra was one of them. He was a neighbour of Nilakantha Babu and belonged to his clan. He did not know English. But he was an efficient teacher. His son Nilamani passed matriculation from the same school and worked as a teacher there. Chintamani, the other son, also passed matriculation from the same school. He later passed M.A. and worked as a lecturer in government colleges. He worked as the Principal of a college established in memory of Gopabandhu after retirement. He passed away recently.

The Satyabadi school became famous when Nilakantha Babu joined as a teacher after two years. There were two reasons. Everyone was amazed that someone worked as a teacher in a minor school at a salary of thirty five

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rupees a month instead of taking up a cushy job elsewhere after passing M.A. His sacrifice and ideals created ripples in the minds of educated and uneducated people alike. The earlier apathetic attitude towards education was replaced by a renewed interest. The matter was discussed everywhere. Many people from surrounding villages who came to the Satyabadi market for shopping or to have a *darshan* of Sakhigopal spoke about the school in glowing terms when they returned to the villages even though they might not have set foot in the school. It was Gopabandhu's farsightedness that evoked such an interest in education in such a short time.

But, gradually, a few people turned into harsh critics of the school. The conservatives among the brahmins could not approve of brahmins sporting moustaches, brahmins sharing food with non-brahmins and turning a blind eye to untouchability. The *mahantas* of Puri's *maths*, the pandits of mukti mandapa and other self-styled champions of religious beliefs were enraged. It might be difficult for people today to fathom the reactions of a conservative society seventy years ago. But the criticisms turned strident in a short while. Pandit Sadashiv Mishra Kabyakantha was a highly respected person in Puri. He was esteemed as the sanskrit pandit of the zilla school. But he had been famous later for his successful leadership in establishing the Puri Sanskrit College as also the revival of the *mukti mandap sabha* and *utkal brahmin samiti*. He was close to the power circle in the government. The government had conferred the title of *Mahamahopadhyaya* on him. He opposed the reforms initiated by Nilakantha Babu and his associates. The *mukti mandap* was under his thumb. He utilized it against the Satyabadi group. He had contacts with the *Sasan* villages. His opinion was sought with regard to religious and social conduct. No one had the temerity to cross swords with him. His pre-eminence among the brahmins started to decline because of the reform programmes of the Satyabadi group. Praises were heaped on Satyabadi school for contributing to the cause of education. But Mishra was uncomfortable with the mileage being gained by the Satyabadi group. It was natural for him in the circumstance to uphold conservatism. Gradually, he led the movement against the school.

Social service and nursing were integral part of the school from the beginning. The teachers and students of the school arrived on the scene if cholera broke out in some village. They comforted people and helped them to the extent possible. Homeopathic medicines were introduced in the area under the aegis of the school. The school came to the rescue if a house caught fire in some village. Volunteer groups helped out at the time of *Anla Nabami* and the car festival. The boys went every Sunday to the

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surrounding villages to beg rice. The school's popularity increased thus because of such direct and indirect contacts with the people. In spite of it, an opposite camp was active under cover. The school authorities could have created a climate in favour of them in the nearby brahmin *Sasans* had they made the slightest effort. The reason was that people had realized the importance of English education. The school's role in providing social service was rather limited and there would not have been much opposition to it. But Nilakantha Babu and his associates did not bother about the opposition. The smouldering embers of rumours and slanders circulating among the conservative defenders of faith culminated in flames going up on March 22, 1912. We heard the next morning in the village that the school house had been burnt to cinders. We children ran to the school. Nilakantha Babu, Harihar Babu and others were sitting sadly near the burnt house. This had taken place when I was just a child. But I can clearly recall that day even now. There were only ashes where the school once stood. Nothing had been spared. There were neither cupboards nor books in the library. The children came to school as on any other day. They moved around listlessly. There was that one question on everyone's lips—who could have done this? People came from the Satyabadi market and Suar Sahi. Everyone looked crestfallen. No one had imagined that such misfortunes would befall the school in just three years from its inception. Those who thought that the existence of the Brahmin society was at stake might have concluded that virtue had triumphed over evil. But the fire had been denounced by the common man.

The scene of the grief-stricken teachers sitting helplessly had saddened everyone. Gopabandhu Babu arrived from Puri after getting the news. He stared at the heaps of ashes and the sad-faced students under the Bakul trees. Everyone was even more depressed to see the expression on his face. But he reassured everyone when he said, "It was a thatched house earlier. Now we will have a pucca house. Why do you worry?" Madhusudan Mishra said, "But the school will remain closed until then." Gopabandhu Babu answered, "Why? There is no house. But there are trees around. Hold your classes under the trees." The new direction provided a fresh lease of life to everyone. Everyone was lost in the dream of the Bana Vidyalaya.

Many important events on earth take shape unexpectedly. It is quite common for ripe fruits to fall from trees. But Newton suddenly discovered the law of gravity from it one day. The dream of the steam engine came true on seeing the fluttering cover of the kettle placed on fire. The school had been running for the past three years. Thatched houses had been

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constructed after clearing the trees from the school compound. There was a dense grove surrounding the compound. Everyone knew about the *gurukul* ashrams of yore which had been surrounded by dense trees. But the vision of the Satyabadi School had not as yet gone to the trees. India and Lanka would not have been connected by the *setubandha* at Rameswara if Ravana had not abducted Sita. The Bana Vidyalaya in its new shape would never have seen the light of the day if a few tunnel-visioned, envious people had not burnt the houses in the school compound.

Everyone forgot the incident after a day. The teachers were busy in selecting appropriate places for different classes when we boys arrived the next day at the school. God had perhaps selected the place in advance. The grove surrounding the school was dense. But there were a few clear spots inside the compound. A large space was available under the dense Bakul tree which was converted into the office and the resting places of teachers. Space was found for different classes surrounding this area. The children found the whole arrangement amusing. Leaves and fruits were falling from the trees and squirrels had been running around. Birds chirped on the trees. Everyone sat on narrow mats. Stools for teachers and black boards for classes arrived in a few days. The trunks of the trees provided ample space for the black boards. The children got busy in clearing spaces earmarked for their classes. Scattered leaves were gathered at one place and set on fire. The peon rang the bell for the first time that day in the Bakul forests just before the sunset to make sure that no child was left behind in the forests. Children returned home, dirt smeared all over them. The Bana Vidyalaya waited for the next day for the classes to begin.

Only five classes were being run when the school house had been set on fire—seventh, sixth, fifth and fourth. Class seven had two sections–A and B. Eighth, ninth and tenth classes were yet to open. Now classes are counted from the bottom up. It was exactly the opposite at that time. A coaching class was also being run at the time apart from the four lower classes. The coaching class was meant for those students who were not conversant with English. They were taught English first and then admitted to the class for which they were suitable. English was a compulsory subject from the lowest class. This was in no way in conflict with the nationalism sweeping the country at the time. Class three and Class two were started in January 1913. Godavarish Babu joined the School on the 1st May that year. Class one was started the next year (1914). Krupasindhu Babu (Mishra) passed M.A. that year and joined the school immediately thereafter on November 25. There was a great deal of joy

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when Calcutta University gave temporary affiliation to the school for its students to appear at the matriculation examination. Permanent affiliation was received in 1917. Orissa came under the jurisdiction of Patna University and the affiliation of the school was changed accordingly in 1918. The Bana Vidyalaya functioned as a full-fledged high school for only seven years (1914–1921). The school had existed for a total period of twelve years, counting from the beginning of the Middle English School in 1909. Gopabandhu joined the non-cooperation movement in Orissa as its leader. His beloved school was the first sacrifice that he was to make for the national movement. Twenty thousand rupees had been granted at the time for the school by the Bihar-Orissa Government. The grant was spurned. The matriculation system was scrapped and the school turned into a national school. The decision was not unanimous. Gopabandhu had to contend with several arguments on idealism and reality. Diverse opinions were expressed about the future of the students and the teachers. Nilakantha Babu was totally opposed to the idea of nationalizing the School. Krupasindhu Babu also held the same view. Godavarish Babu was a follower of Gopabandhu. There was a lull in the discussion when it became known that Mahatma Gandhi had agreed to come to Orissa for the first time in March 1921. Gopabandhu decided to sever the links of the school with the government and submerge it with the national movement before the visit of Mahatma Gandhi. And that came to pass. The school disintegrated in the process. Many students left the school for other schools. The guardians were in a quandary. A few teachers went elsewhere to seek a livelihood. Mahatma Gandhi visited the School on March 26, 1921. There was a huge gathering at the school. He left for Puri the same afternoon. Gopabandhu was out of favour with the government for his close links with the non-cooperation movement. The famous school also fell out of favour with the populace. The school had been upgraded to a national college two years later in 1923. But this was purely ornamental. An effort had been made once again to revive the school and get university affiliation. But the effort failed and the school was closed once for all in 1926 chiefly due to a resource crunch. Gopabandhu passed away two years later in June 1928.

The Satyabadi school had come into existence with ambitious goals. It became famous when it was struck with misfortune. It drew everyone's attention after the school house was burnt down on March 22, 1912. Everyone had been captivated by the novelty of the Bana Vidyalaya. It was a unique experience for people to see teachers with M.A. degrees teaching English under the trees to students sitting on palm leaf mats. On top of it,

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the teachers worked for virtually no pay. Guardians brought their children from all over Orissa. Parents of unruly children in the cities believed that they would mend their ways if they were admitted to the Bana Vidyalaya. However, problems at the School multiplied with the increase in the number of students. Classes could be held in the open spaces. But accommodation was needed for the students coming from outside. Thatched houses were constructed for the purpose. These filled up to capacity in no time. Three blocks (A, B and C) were built around the school house that had been destroyed in the fire. The D block was also constructed later at a distance for the students studying in the upper classes. The mess, dining hall and patients' quarters were also built. Even when these were under construction, these places served as class rooms during the rains.

The Utkal Sammilani had a meeting at Puri in 1913 December. A proposal was moved by Fakir Mohan Senapati lauding the achievements of the Bana Vidyalaya which was supported by the Rajasaheb of Kanika and Braja Sundar Das. It was resolved to seek financial support from the public to get over the resource crunch at the school. The popularity and fame of the Bana Vidyalaya may be envisaged from such a move. In fact, a pucca building was built for the school without any government support in less than a year. Common people had contributed generously in response to the appeal. But the classes continued to be held under the trees. The library and study equipment were housed in the pucca building. Inspectors visited the school at regular intervals. Sometimes, they were accompanied by their wives too. It was a rare experience for children to see gentlemen clad in European clothes. Biscuits and several kinds of fruits were placed on a table for them. That too was a novel sight for all of us. We felt gratified to get a share in the unused delicacies after the departure of the visitors. Gopabandhu Babu was the secretary and head of the school. He was always present when officials from the education department visited the school. He was immaculately dressed on such occasions, with a black turban on his head. Nilakantha Babu, Hari Babu and Krupasindhu Babu wore pants, round neck coats and turbans. Godavarish Babu stood out with his pant, coat, tie and felt hat. Who had imagined at the time that these people would switch over to knee-length khaddar dhotis at a later stage to be adored as great leaders of the Congress?

Nilakantha Babu sometimes lived in his village. But he spent most of the days in the school boarding. He used to wear a pant and a coat and a white turban with golden borders on his head initially upon joining the

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school. Those days he used to commute everyday to the school from his village. Later, he switched to a dhoti and a kameez. Other teachers of the School also wore the same thing. No one wore a panjabi at the time. Godavarish Babu lived with his family in a thatched house at the time at the back of the Satyabadi market. A corner room in the office of Lalababu zemindar had been arranged for Krupasindhu Babu. He lived there with his wife. Hari Babu lived in the hostel. Other teachers either commuted from their villages or houses at Satyabadi. Gradually, many of them moved to the boarding. No noise could be heard outside the school compound even though hundreds of students attended class everyday. Those who came to have a *darshan* of Sakhigopal dropped in at the school in groups as if it was a place of piligrimage. They went back to their villages and talked about the uniqueness of the school.

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# To Boarding School

I used to commute to the Satyabadi School from our village for the first three years out of the six that I spent at the school. The school was about three miles (five kilometres) from the village. The first mile was a dirt road. About fourteen children went from our village to the school everyday. I was perhaps the youngest among them. No one had a watch. We measured time in two different ways. The children knew that it was time to bathe when the bell rang in the morning in the Gopinath temple. We had to bathe quickly in the pond and get ready for the school after eating watered rice. Our house was at the western end of the village. Everyone had to come that way. The boys would call me if I was not standing outside the house. All of us walked to the school in a group. Everyone wore a dhoti and an uppercloth. At times, someone wore a banian or a kameez. Everyone was barefoot. We reached the school before the bell rang. We had to stand outside the class if we were late. We entered the class after admitting our fault, explaining it and being forgiven for it by the teacher engaging the first period. One had to get the permission of the headmaster if he was delayed by more than five minutes. One was considered to be absent for a day if he was late on three days. One was supposed to pay a fine for that. But it was condoned at the end of the month. Many children came from a radius of three miles. They were mostly from Sriramachandrapur, Banapur, Samasarapur, Bira Ramachandrapur, Nuagaon, Jaipur, our village and so forth. I am now amazed to think how I walked such distances everyday in my childhood. Perhaps we could not feel the strain as we walked in a group. It was almost evening by the time we returned home. We had fried *chura* or watered rice when we returned. We were supposed to study for some time when the lamps were lit. Children

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gathered at two or three places in the village for the purpose. Oil was provided for the lamps in turn by the concerned households. No one had any desire to study in the evenings. But we were forced to study since the villages were distributed among the teachers of the school. They came to inspect some evenings if the boys studied in the evenings or not. One had to explain his conduct at the school the next day if he was found to be delinquent.

The school hours began in the morning during the summer months. We had to start from the village very early in the morning. We returned home at high noon. We took rest under the trees at intervals. Children carry tiffin boxes, water bottles, books and notebooks inside their bags to the schools these days. These things were unheard-of during those days. Our clothes were dirty by the time we returned home, testimony to the dirt roads that we travelled. Sometimes, we took a shortcut through paddy fields in stead of taking the straight road. But that hurt our feet. The heat was terrible when we returned home at noontime. No one had the luxury of shoes or *chappals*. Children get used to chappals from birth these days. We ran most of the way while going to the school for fear that we might be late. However, the return journey was enjoyable for one reason in spite of the excruciating heat. We hurled stones at the mangoes hanging from the trees. The stones thrown by me never reached the fruits. But the bigger children managed to get a few mangoes down and we all shared in the spoils. The scheduled caste woman, who kept a watch over the trees, ran towards us with a stick in hand to shoo us away. When she came near one tree, we used to run to another. We were brahmin children. She could not touch us, forget about beating us. How she cursed us! She said anything that came to her lips. But she fell silent after a while.

I get the shivers when I recall the rainy season. Raincoats were unheard-of. Everyone did not have an umbrella. About one mile of the road from the village till the Jagannath sadak was full of mud. There were large pools of water on the way. Sometimes, the pools were deep and muddy. We lifted the dhotis above the knees and tied towels around the waists to prevent our clothes from getting wet. One umbrella served for three boys when the rains started. Two boys shared one palm leaf headgear. We did not mind getting drenched from the waist up. We wiped ourselves dry with the towels upon reaching the School. Those four months were indeed tough on us. The teachers understood our problems and were lenient. The Bana Vidyalaya was different from all other schools. We often wondered why they did not give us a vacation during the rainy season in stead of the summer. Classes were not held in the open during

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the rains. They were moved under the thatched houses. Attendance was thin in the school during this period. Most of the children suffered from common cold and fever. Ginger juice and honey did not help much. Most days I passed off to sleep in an exhausted state on my return. Mani Pisi refused to let me go if anyone came to call me to join the study group. She suffered when I suffered. Sometimes, she massaged my feet with oil when I slept near her in the night. There were rashes between my fingers on the feet. She applied warm oil to the affected parts. I haven't received so much of love and affection elsewhere.

We had to get up very early in the morning to study for the classes. We just made a show of being busy with our books. The women of the house were more worried about us attending school. Kindling wood were collected in advance and stacked on the racks in the kitchen to cook rice and dal in the morning. We did not have the luxury of burning firewood. Most people in the village used kindling wood as fuel. When trees owned by the village community were cut, a few people bought the wood and saved it for occasions like marriage or sacred thread ceremony. They were not used for everyday cooking.

Our house had one and a half room. One room was about six feet long measuring from the east to the west. There were two thatched houses at the entrance. One was the living room with a door leading outside. Pisi and I slept in that room. Women guests also slept there. A mat was enough to sleep on the floor in the night. The room was left open during the daytime for people to go outside and come inside. The verandah outside was narrow, four by three feet. That was enough to manage in the village. Anyone dropping in from the village did not mind sitting on the bare floor on the verandah. A low stool was placed on the floor for visitors from outside the village. If a guest had to stay for the night, we left the living room for him and moved to the verandah inside the house. Mother slept in the room adjacent to the living room. There was a cot in that room which occupied about three-fourth of the room. All household goods were kept under the cot. There was a platform under the thatch in the living room. The platform could be approached from mother's room. One had to use a ladder to reach the platform. All boxes and the salted mango pot were kept on the platform. That was the strong room of the house. A partition had been made in mother's room to house the deities. There was a small window there just to know whether it was day or night. The deities were kept on a pedestal. The rice pot was kept in that room on one side. No one was permitted to enter that room without wearing a *gamcha* or a

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wet dhoti. I was ordered to go naked inside the room when there was an urgency to get the brass plate, pot and lamp of the deities for cleaning. The empty space in mother's room was used as the dining space for the males of the family. The living room was used for the purpose if there were guests in the house. Certain rules were observed while sitting down for lunch and dinner. The place was cleaned and water sprinkled on it. Low stools were placed to sit on. A pot of water was kept on one side. As far as practicable, we sat facing the east. A son whose father lived was forbidden to eat facing the south. One was not permitted to sit down to eat without washing his feet and hands. No one was permitted to eat anything from the kitchen as long as offerings had not been made to the deities. The hearth may not be lit in the kitchen. But no deviations from these rules were permitted. These rules were observed in almost all the households. All activities were carried on in one room if one's house was small—puja, dining, sleeping and moving about. It was accepted as a way of life. Our forefathers not only knew the art of simple living; they had mastered this art. Wants are unlimited when we succumb to them one after the other.

There was a single room after one crossed the living room. There was also a narrow passage by the side of the room which led to two more thatched houses at the back. Uncle (father's elder brother) lived in that room. The furniture in the room consisted of a cot and a small, wooden cupboard. The cupboard contained Oriya books. There were plain notebooks and other assorted papers on top of the cupboard. Father took part in the meetings held in connection with the national movement under the leadership of Mukhtar Ramachandra Mishra while he served as a teacher in Puri. A few placards containing nationalist slogans were in the cupboard. I can recall a few of them—'mother tongue and motherland—both are mothers' and 'We would rather not be babus. Let our money stay inside our country'. There were a few poetry books. A few other books written by Nilamani Bidyaratna under the title 'Ratnarenu' were also there. I started stealing things at that time. There were two brothers called Siddha and Somnath among the children of the village who went to study at the Satyabadi School. Their uncle's house was in front of our house. Siddha was our leader. He persuaded me to carry printed books and plain paper from the cupboard in uncle's room. I tore a few sheets now and then from the exercise books when uncle was not in his room and handed them over to Siddha. Siddha distributed the paper among the children. My importance grew among the children. My stealing also increased. The printed books started vanishing one after another. It did not strike me that even though no one saw me stealing the books and the papers, I would be

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ultimately caught when the racks of the cupboard became empty. The cat drank the milk with its eyes closed thinking that no one was observing it. So it thought that it won't be caught. It realised its folly when it got hit from behind. One day uncle needed paper to write something. When he looked inside the cupboard, he found all the paper inside the hard covers of the exercise books missing. The books were missing too. He started shouting in anger. Everyone at home was scared when he got angry. I would have been beaten to pulp if he would have found me then. It was quite common for him to beat someone up when angry. We tried our best to hide from him at such moments. He had a daughter at the time; Siria Nani was extremely fond of me. She shielded me from uncle often. In the process, she got bashed up by uncle sometimes. But she did not mind it. Uncle's anger was momentary. He was mad one moment; calm the next moment. All of us were adept at handling him for that short duration. Uncle changed a great deal after the death of his younger brother and Siria Nani. He mellowed. He married again and became a father of sons. He also turned out to be a learned person. His eldest son Gangadhar was a famous advocate of Puri. He was also a minister of the Government of Orissa several times. Another son Chandrashekhar was a journalist and litterateur. He was the editor of the daily 'Prajatantra'. Shashi Shekhar and Rajkishore, the other sons, have excelled in their own chosen fields. Uncle was like the Bel fruit; hard on the exterior, soft and juicy inside.

Uncle was not as much hurt by the disappearance of the books and papers as by the fact that he had not been able to observe anything for such a long time even though he lived in that room. Perhaps he felt a bit ashamed about it and the whole episode was nipped in the bud without any further ado. However, Siria Nani and Mani Nani were fully aware of my culpability in the matter. I hid myself from uncle's sight for a few days until normalcy was restored. But I never lifted anything from the cupboard again. However, the guilt feeling persisted with me for quite some time as I had not been punished for my sin.

Mother and I made a trip to Khurda at that time. Raghunath Mishra, the eldest uncle, had not passed matriculation. But he worked as a clerk in a government office. He was tall and broad. His earning was limited; but he lived within his means. He had taken a house near the court on rent. He lived with his wife. They did not have any children. Aunt was outgoing. She knew how to talk. She was affectionate. She was fond of mother. Mother had taken me to Khurda for the treatment of my scabies. Uncle took me to the doctor and got me treated. The scabies was cured in about ten to twelve days. We stayed there for another ten days. It was

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enjoyable. Uncle was fond of big fish. Eating well was his passion. Fish was brought for the puja of the goddess of whom my uncle was a great devotee. But it was only an excuse and everyone went along with it. We visited the Barunei hills to worship Goddess Barunei. When uncle returned from the office, I accompanied Aparti, his orderly, to the market near the court. Aparti did the shopping. But I watched the tennis game in progress in the compound of the office of the S.D.O. in amazement. Two persons played the game. One was a sahib; the other was a memsahib. That was the first time I laid my eyes on a sahib. Hershfield, I.C.S., S.D.O. I did not understand the game. But it was a novel experience to watch the players. Perhaps I made up my mind to be a sahib myself from that day onwards. I went everyday after that to watch the players in action. It did not matter whether Aparti accompanied me or not.

Uncle wore a dhoti and kameez to the office. He used silver buttons on his kameez. The kameez was given to the washerman once a week for cleaning. The silver buttons were removed from the kameez and kept on a shelf when the washerman came the day before we left Khurda. It did not strike me that the buttons would be needed again the next morning. I took the lace holding the four buttons from the shelf and stuck it to my waist. I spent a restless night thinking all the time about sticking the buttons to my kameez. I did not know how to stick the buttons to the kameez. I made the holes in the kameez with the help of aunt's nut cracker. But the holes were bigger than the buttons. My dirty work had got me nowhere. But I was still possessed with greed. I kept the buttons with me hoping that I would do something with them when I returned to the village. We were supposed to come to the Jatni railway station by bullock cart the next morning. Uncle looked for the buttons as we were about to start. He asked aunt who, in turn, asked Aparti. Why would anyone suspect the rogue nephew? The search was still on as we sat on the bullock cart along with Aparti. I was fidgety by the time we reached the railway station. The buttons were with me. Mother had no inkling about it. I was worried that aunt might suspect mother. Finally, I handed over the buttons to Aparti when I got down from the cart. I do not recall how I justified the possession of the buttons. I have no idea whether Aparti handed over the buttons to aunt or not, and what he told her. But uncle and aunt have come to the village on later occasions. The matter of the buttons has never been raised. The buttons perhaps remained with Aparti. Uncle might have doubted him and kept quiet. Many things including money have been stolen from my house at a later stage. Even now, it happens quite often. But I recall these two incidents of my childhood at such times. I only ask

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the servants once and keep quiet. Everyone knows that things get stolen at regular intervals at our house at Cuttack. My second daughter-in-law wrote to her son when he came to live with us to study in the college, "A lot of things get stolen at that place. Be on your guard." The mother of the thief does not cry often. When she cries, she bolts the door from inside and then cries.

There were two more low thatched rooms at the back. One of those rooms had been divided into two parts. The hearth was on one side. The other side was a kind of store room. The pots were kept in the store room after the cooking was over. No one was permitted to enter the stores except the person who cooked. Any unauthorised entry would result in sullying the kitchen. There was no easier way to protect the little bit of watered rice left in the pot from hungry stomachs. The room adjacent to the kitchen houses the *dhenki* (husking pedal block with lever arrangements). It also contains a passage to the backyard. That was the meeting place of the elderly ladies of the family. Women spent most of their time in the kitchen or the room housing the *dhenki.* Operating the *dhenki* was the job of the daughters-in-law. The mother-in-law and the sisters-in-law fed the *dhenki* with paddy, took out the rice and separated the husk. The division of labour had been done keeping an eye on the age of the persons engaged in the work. No one was allowed to sit idle. All household work was completed without the daughter-in-law opening her mouth. It is hard to imagine now that there was no scope for my mother and the elder uncle to talk in a loud voice. They spoke very softly even while talking to the children. It was considered to be a matter of shame to show any affection to one's own children or to upbraid them in front of the elderly women of the house. The daughter-in-law had to signal with her hands or speak in a squeaking voice if she had to convey any message. My mother had to behave likewise until older women were alive in the family. My grandmother had passed away when I was a kid. Then my Pisi, who had become a widow in her childhood, took over as the head of the family. She passed away in 1923 when I was studying I.A. Mother had never uttered a word loudly until then.

In the matter of running the household, very little importance was being attached to children's studies. Going to school was just a way of passing the time. No one really cared whether the children studied or not, and if they faced any difficulties in their studies. Father held a different view. He came to the village during the Puja vacation. He understood my difficulties in commuting such a long distance to and from the school

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every day. He got a salary of only thirty rupees a month. But he was regarded as a big government employee in the village circle. It would be befitting his position if his son lived in the boarding. The physical strain of the son would also be lessened. The only hurdle was the boarding expenses. Father made enquiries at the school. He found that it was within his means to take care of the expenses. So he made the arrangements for me to stay in the boarding. I was the only boy from the village who was going to stay in the boarding. And I was the youngest of the boys at that. This was the chief topic of discussion in the village for a few days. Mother and Pisi opposed it vehemently. They were very much concerned that I would not be able to manage on my own in the boarding. One month passed amid such discussions. Finally, I went and stayed in Room No. 3 in the 'A' Block hostel before the onset of the rainy season.

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# Hostel

Tumultuous scenes were witnessed at home the day I was to leave for the boarding. There might not have been as much excitement in the palace the day the Gajapati Maharaja of Puri would have started out for the battle with the King of Kanchi. Mother and Mani Pisi were overbusy in arranging my clothes and books. I had just three dhotis out of which I was wearing one. Other accessories included a *gamcha*, a *chaddar* and a kameez. I was wearing the only *banian* I had. The clothes and the books were arranged in a small bamboo box. It was past noontime by the time the *brouhaha* was over. Bhobana, the menial, carried the box on his head. I walked alongside father. Pisi too decided to come with us. She wanted to take a look at the place I was going to stay. She was in tears as she would feel very lonely in the village after I left for the boarding. My excitement about going to the boarding waned considerably on seeing her crying incessantly. But I did not have any option in the matter. Hari Babu was sitting on the verandah of 'A' Block on a chair when we reached the hostel. He paid his respects to father and bid him sit beside him. He ran his fingers on my head and took me to Room No. 3. My bed was near the wall opposite the door. There was a window above it. He called Chandra Shekhar Mishra, the room monitor, and told him, "He's a new boy. Take care of him." Chandra knew his job all right. He studied in an upper class. All the boys studying in the upper classes competed among themselves to be identified as model students by the teachers. A model student was supposed to have unkempt hair and wear dirty dhotis with no uppercloth. He would have a penchant for wrestling. He would have a sombre face and be a backbiter. There was a group of boys who competed fiercely among themelves to be identified as model students. Room monitors and mess

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monitors were chosen from among the model students. It was the ideal for the students of the school to lead a life of austerity, hard work, discipline and sacrifices. The hostel was the laboratory for such experiments. The authorities gave too much importance to the roles of the monitors in enforcing discipline. As a result, there was a great deal of resentment among the ordinary students. The monitors thought that they would be considered to be more capable monitors and model students if they would be able to find more faults with the ordinary students. Therefore, many of them did not balk from telling lies and adopting other unfair means. The monitors were no different from the other students. They were the same age and moulded in the same cast as the other boys. But they considered others to be inferior to them once they were appointed monitors. Their spying was also encouraged by the teachers. "He's a new boy. Take care of him."—I understood its significance only at a later stage.

I had carried a small bamboo box with me from home. But I did not have a mat to sleep on. Chandra Babu, the monitor, asked me, "How would you sleep?" I remained silent. The monitor glared at them when the other boys in the room broke into laughter. Everyone fell quiet. I was asked by the monitor to sit on the earthen floor. Hari Babu came inside the room at this time. He stayed in Room No. 1. He slept in that room. But he sat at one end of the verandah most of the time. There was a chair and a desk there. The three blocks of the hostel could be clearly seen from that place. He was the superintendent of the hostel, the *Acharya*. He found me sitting on the floor. He told the monitor, "Why don't you give him a palm leaf mat if he hasn't brought anything to sleep on? He's new. You should guide him." He bought a palm leaf mat from the market and gave it to me. The monitor was embarrassed. "He's new. Take care of him"—the monitor understood the real meaning of the words only then. He did not trouble me thereafter. Perhaps he thought that it was better to have the new boy on his side. All the hostel rooms were of a kind. Each room had one door. There was one window on the wall facing the door and two windows on the two sides of the door. The monitor's bed was under one of the windows near the door. The number of boys to be allotted to a room depended on the number of mats it could accommodate. Six boys lived in my room besides the monitor. In emergencies, another boy was made to squeeze in. Very few boys had quilts. A few had cloth mattresses. Some had pillows. Others put their hands under their heads as pillows. A few model students put bricks under their heads. One had to go through hardships in life in order to get somewhere. Quilts and mattresses carried by the rich, town boys were tied in to a bundle and kept aside. They were

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permitted to use only a few things out of what they carried. Madan Mohan Mohapatra of Ganjam, Satyabadi Singh, the nephew of Jagabandhu Singh of Puri, and Nagendranath Mohapatra of Midnapore belonged to this category. They belonged to an altogether different class. Their clothes were different from others. Their breakfast came from the common *bhog* of the Sakhigopal Temple. This included powdered gram, pomegranates, sweets, etc. The commoners had *murhi* as breakfast and snack. That too was not available to everyone. Some carried *chura* from their home. One rupee at the time consisted of 64 paise which was equal to 128 *adhalas* and 192 *pahulas*. Middle class boys' breakfast consisted of an *adhala*'s *murhi* and an *adhala's ukhuda*. Most of the students had only *murhi*. A few went without any breakfast or snack. They depended only on lunch and dinner. Those who carried *chura* from home soaked it in water in a pot and used it for breakfast. The arrangements made by a few were truly amazing. They had *chura*, country ghee, gur and coconuts in their boxes. They made use of those things at times. A few boys made use of delicacies sent from home. The financial condition of the boys could be known from the quality and quantity of snacks they had. The hostel mess provided no snacks. A vendor came to the hostel to sell *murhi* and *ukhura* at the end of school hours.

Except for the four or five rich boys, the rest led almost a similar life. Strict discipline forced the boys to put up with the inconveniences faced without any protest. The teachers were strict disciplinarians. Hence, the boys were expected to live up to an image. Everyone was clear in the mind that they were busy in doing something worthwhile. We had no idea what that worthwhile work was. The children are as enthusiastic as the adults when there is a major function at home like a marriage or a sacred thread ceremony. They might not understand what it was all about; but there was no lack of enthusiasm.

There were sixteen *sasans* and thirty two earmarked brahmin settlements around Satyabadi. Children came from these places to study English when the School started. They commuted to the school on feet everyday. Two boys came from the Pattanayikia Street located between Satyabadi and Sriramachandrapur. Children of a few shopkeepers of the Satyabadi market also came to the school. They belonged to brahmin, karan and vaishya families. Children from shudra families did not venture to come to the school. There was no special effort by anyone either to bring them to the school. The number of children increased constantly after the hostels were constructed. One after another block was

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constructed to house the children. But there was always demand for more. But no space was available for the construction of any new hostel. Even the 'D' Block was constructed at a place away from the school premises. Boys came from princely states, Mughalbandi areas, Singhbhum, Midnapore, Ganjam, Jeypore, Chikiti, etc. Children gathered at one school from all Oriya-speaking places. This had never been seen earlier. It was natural for people to take notice of this. A sense of nationalism developed on its own. There was no feeling of regionalism among the students and teachers. Casteism too could not raise its ugly head. Neither the teachers nor the students found anything amiss when a few shudra boys came to live in the boarding. A few murmurs could be heard when the untouchables (later known as harijans) came later to the hostels. Haladhar Mahapatra was a teacher in the School and he lived in one of the hostels as the assistant superintendent. He wore a pair of wooden chappals to the class on his slightly swollen, filarial feet. He believed that a teacher had to be ruthless in order to be effective. He was a devout brahmin. His conservatism showed even in the hostel in his conduct. He never participated in a community feast. He never unrolled his sleeping mat except at the time of sleeping for fear that someone might sit on it. He did all his work in the hostel room sitting on a mat. He had somehow put up with the fact that shudra boys stayed in the hostel and dined in the common mess. Of course, he maintained his distance from these fellows as far as was practicable. But it was just too much for him when the untouchables came to stay in the hostel. He revolted openly. A few other teachers who supported him remained non-commital. A few brahmin boys from respectable families complained to Hari Babu (who became known as the Acharya later) that they would face trouble when they returned to their villages as their sacred threads would be defiled. All these problems, however, were solved very easily with a couple of sentences from Gopabandhu Babu. He asked, "Do you give alms to someone at your door after asking him about his caste? Why do you ask the caste of someone who is here to beg to be educated?" No one had an answer to that. Haladhar Mahapatra left for his village. This event, which had taken place in the Satyabadi school ten years before the non-cooperation movement, publication of the 'Harijan' magazine and anti-untouchability movement, had no parallel elsewhere in India. When I recall the past now, I wonder how we boys had a sense of pride and elation at that tender age as if we were participating in a great *yajna* .That was the foundation for love of the nation and national integration. That was basic to the School; studying was secondary. The boarding was the nucleus; the School revolved around it.

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Several experiments were made in the boarding as if it was a laboratory of some sort. Any experiment that succeeded was being loudly acclaimed by the outside world. Discipline was imposed in the hostels with an eye on the age and learning of the boarders. A balance was being maintained between tradition and modernity. There were basic differences in the outlooks of the three persons who held sway over the School. Gopabandhu Babu was spiritual and old-fashioned. Nilakantha Babu was logical in approach. He gave equal importance to conservatism, scientific spirit, belief in God and agnosticism. Godavarish Babu was modern in his outlook. Ignorance of the past was excusable for him. All of them accepted the advice of Gopabandhu as an order unless it was entirely unacceptable. Hence, the basic strength of these three persons was not known outside their circle. They conducted themselves as the compliant members of a disciplined organisation. However, this situation began to change later and there were serious differences of opinion among them towards the last phase of the school.

Emphasis had been laid on three things when the boarding was started:

(i) Everyone had to get up very early in the morning. The bell hanging in front of the Acharya's room rang softly in the beginning. Then the bell was rung at a swift pace. Finally, it rang stridently for a third time. The bell was rung for three minutes. The first job of the monitor was to call the boys who did not get up and, if necessary, throw some water on their faces. There was no way one could feign illness and sleep longer. If someone was ill, he had to go to the sick room. Everyone was scared of that. Hence, everyone tried to get up as soon as the bell was rung. The bed roll had to be rolled up immediately and kept in a corner. One had to don himself in a *gamcha* and go outdoors to finish the daily rituals. Sticks of trees served as toothbrushes. Boys went to the unused spaces of the bakul forest or near the Ketakijhara Pond in order to defecate. This was usually finished before the breaking of the dawn and the boys tried to find the most convenient place for the job as quickly as possible. Then they went to the *Shyam Kunda Pond* near the temple or to the *Chandan Pond* to bathe. No one used oil or soap. No one had a mirror or a comb as they were considered superfluous. Anyone in possession of a mirror usually kept it out of sight and looked at his face in it when no one was looking. Combing one's hair was forbidden. The children were supposed to lead a life of austerity. Everyone tried to be as quick as possible as they had to return to the room before the second bell was rung. One was not permitted to get

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inside the room if he was late. One had to present himself before Hari Babu, explain the delay and go to his seat only after being permitted to do so. The boys were chided as stupid if they were late for more than one day. Hundreds of boys lived in the hostel. But a boy returning late from bathing was not a very common occurrence. One was considered to be incompetent if he returned late from bathing. Hence, everyone tried not to be labelled as such. Everyone had to brush his teeth, defecate and bathe in the morning. The monitor was supposed to bring it to the notice of the Acharya when anyone was found to be delinquent. The monitor collected information from his cronies. Every monitor engaged a couple of spies. Administration could never run without spies! Apparently, the reason behind this rule was to find out if someone had deviated from the routine because of potential sickness. But, in fact, the boys were scared as the rule could be used against them any time. Hence, everyone took care to finish the three phases of the daily rituals in time unless someone was really indisposed. I had scabies in the waist. I stuck blotting paper over it before wearing my clothes and did not report it to anyone. I would have been sent to the sick room otherwise. It was highly uncomfortable for me to bathe in the cold water of the pond. But I had to bear it with fortitude as I could do nothing about it. However, I always tried my best to return to my seat before the second bell was rung.

At times, someone hung his wet clothes to dry after washing them in the pond to indicate that he has had his bath when the body and the mind were unwilling to have a bath so early in the winter mornings. The culprit was sometimes caught when the matter was reported by a backbiter. He was forced to persuade his unwilling mind to bend later.

(ii) The third bell was rung a little while after the second bell. That indicated that everyone had to sit down for prayer. Everyone sat cross-legged in his own seat in order to pray. A small prayer book had been printed and provided to each child. Nilakantha Babu had compiled the book. Most of the boys recited their prayers loudly. A few elderly boys did *pranayam*. One or two read the Bhagavad Gita. One had to pray until the fourth bell was rung. Hari Babu or Basu Babu took a round at this time to ensure that everything proceeded in an orderly manner. The prayer bell was also rung during the evening hours.

This habit was quite helpful in later life in the development of the philosophy of life. In due course, we understood the power of prayers.

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The habit has not only been confined to me. My children have themselves inculcated the habit upon seeing me. Their children do likewise. This discipline has become the foundation of our lives.

(iii) There was emphasis on another thing besides getting up early in the morning and engaging in prayer. All the boarders had to sit together to dine. A bell was rung to indicate that the prayer time was over. The boarders had to engage in studies till the fifth bell was rung. One had to go to the mess then to eat. Everyone sat down to eat together irrespective of his caste or creed. There was a great deal of opposition to this in the surrounding villages. Echoes of such opposition were also heard in the meetings of the Mukti Mandap in Puri. Pandit Sadashiv Mishra was at the forefront of the movement against the School. He openly alleged that the Satyabadi people were a group of renegades who caused harm to the religion. Efforts were even made to excommunicate them. Nilakantha Babu got ready to challenge the move openly. This was like adding fuel to fire. Pandit Sadashiv Mishra was well known in the government circle. He used that advantage to instigate government officials against the school. His only argument was the defilement of religion. The British Government did not much interfere in religious affairs. Hence, the moves of Mishra did not succeed. Mishra took the matter to elite brahmins, the so-called defenders of the faith. He called a protest meeting. But Nilakantha Babu arrived there to defend the school authorities. He had the confidence of youth, and he was idealistic and sagacious. He was also an eloquent speaker. The ultraconservative pandits found it extremely hard to counter the arguments of Nilakantha Babu. Kabyakantha Sadashiv Mishra and his supporters had mostly counted on the support of the brahmin *sasans* near Puri. They were not aware of the reality. The children from most of the families in the brahmin *sasans* studied in the School. It was but natural that the guardians of these children would refrain from opposing the school authorities. Kabyakantha and his followers did not get the support they had expected. The gunpowder in their rockets was damp. The rockets did not take off and there were no fireworks as expected. Community dining continued in the boarding.

Food in the boarding was extremely ordinary. Most of the children were from poor families. All the arrangements were made accordingly. Coarse rice, dal and a curry was the staple food both the times in the day. The vegetables included brinjals, pumpkins and plantains. The quantity of

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plantains was very little. There was the gaiety of a gala feast when shrimps were cooked once a month or in two months. A kind of curry known as '*shakara*' made up of tamarind, pumpkin and gur came to the plate at long intervals depending on the whims of the mess manager. Dal had to be watery in order to provide for so many boarders. I had once described the state of dal provided to us in the boarding before a few people at Cuttack. It had been appreciated a great deal by the people present. Lokanath Patnaik was a sub-inspector at Cuttack. His nephew Baikuntha (the famous poet Baikuntha Nath Patnaik later) was interested to study in the Satyabadi school. My father was an assistant sub-inspector of schools. He had come to Cuttack in connection with some official work. I had come to him to see Cuttack. One day, I was going with father from Mohammadia Bazar to Nayasarak. Lokanath Babu was staying in a rented house in front of the post office at Chandni Chowk. He was sitting on a small bench on the roadside in front of his house. Father went to him. Lokanath Babu sent for Baikuntha to know more about the boarding when he heard that I was studying at Satyabadi. When they asked me about food, I told them that one had to take a dip in that *dal* in order to find half a grain of dal. Everyone broke into laughter on hearing that. However, Baikuntha had not been dissuaded by that. He went to Satyabadi a few days later and stayed in the boarding. But the humid atmosphere of Satyabadi did not agree with him. He suffered from fever which later led to pneumonia. We knew each other earlier. So we became friends. That friendship continued through our school and college days. In fact, it continued throughout our lives.

Lokanath Babu was the classmate and a good friend of Gopabandhu Babu. The Satyabadi group respected him. They met him when they came to Cuttack. Hari Babu had come to him from Satyabadi a couple of days after my narration of the state of dal in the boarding. Lokanath Babu told him about it in jest. Hari Babu saw me at the hostel upon returning from Cuttack and asked, "I heard that you had been to Cuttack. What happened there?" I was scared out of my wits upon hearing that. I tried to hide from him for a few days out of fear. I wondered what wrong I had done at Cuttack. Father had purchased a pair of shoes costing one rupee and four annas (four annas equal twenty five paise) for me from the shop of G. Nayak at Cuttack. I thought Hari Babu referred to that. I hid the pair under my shelf of books. There was no scope to wear shoes either in the school or the boarding. I used to wear them when I went to the village on Sundays. But I had no idea that it might be held against me. However, my efforts to hide from Hari Babu did not succeed for long. We came face

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to face one day when I was going to the drill class. Nilakantha Babu was with him. Hari Babu said, "Do you know something, Kantha? This boy has gone to Cuttack and told Lokanath Patnaik that one has to take a dip in the dal here in order to find a grain of dal." Everyone laughed. Nilakantha Babu said, "Why do you make the dal so watery?" The matter was laid to rest with that. My unnecessary fears too came to an end.

But the dal continued to be the same as before. We paid three rupees and eight annas every month towards mess expenses. How could dal be any thicker with such measly amount? This was the second decade of the twentieth century. It would be difficult to get a meal of rice, dal and a vegetable curry now for three rupees. Those who carried rice from home and deposited with the mess got a rebate. Nothing was charged towards mess expenses to extremely poor students.

Many boys suffered from scabies in the hostel. This was perhaps because of lack of nutritious food. No vitamin tablets were available at the time. Hiralal Babu, the doctor working in the Satyabadi hospital, was the Dhanwantari of that area. He was fair, short-statured and heavyset. He wore pant and coat. His watch had a gold band. He had passed L.M.P. (Licensed Medical Practitioner). He was soft-spoken. He was an eminent doctor of the time. We were scared when he visited the boarding. The spots of the body affected by scabies were washed mercilessly with carbolic soap and hot water and a yellow ointment with a terrible smell was applied thereon. The discomfort of treatment exceeded the pain of the disease. Hence, we tried to hide our diseases as far as possible.

We were not entirely dissatisfied with the food in the mess. So many boys sitting together to dine was fun by itself. The mess committee was selected from among the boarders. Elderly and strong boys volunteered to serve food. It was the harbinger of self-rule. A feast was held once a month. That consisted of a *khichdi*, *dalma* and a sour-tasting curry. Porridge was added at times to make it seem like a festive occasion.

Physical exercise was as compulsory as prayer and studies in the boarding. The hostel had a wide courtyard. The boys were divided into different groups for push-ups, wrestling, parallel bars, drill, marching and sprinting. Basu Babu (Basudev Mohapatra) was the captain of all the events. A few other teachers and the elderly students trained the other boys under his tutelage. *Kabaadi* was also played along with physical exercises. The boys were quite enthusiastic about the games and exercises. The whistle was blown time and again. The boys tried to exhibit their physical prowess during the exercise hour to gain fame. I can still recall the muscular body of Basu Babu with a tight loincloth. Kids like us, however,

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were not allowed to participate in the rough games, and, in the process, we could never take advantage of the inspired leadership he provided.

The *Slokanta* competition held every Saturday evening was another specialty of the boarding. The teachers staying in the boarding also attended these competitions as observers. The competition started with one of the boys reciting a Sanskrit *sloka.* The boys of the opposite camp were required to use the last letter of the sloka so recited as the first letter of a new sloka. And so the competition continued until one of the camps conceded defeat when it was unable to recite a sloka. The competition was normally held among the different blocks of the hostel. At times, it was held among the students of different classes living in the hostel. The boys had to learn new slokas from the Sanskrit teacher of the School and memorize them for the purpose. The slokas being memorized by the different boys were kept a closely-guarded secret. A couple of boys were extremely cunning. Narayan Mahapatra was one of them. He had a round face and a protruding tummy. He gave the impression that he could recite Sanskrit slokas effortlessly. When he recited the slokas in a high-pitched voice, it was difficult to understand what he actually said. Only the last letter of the sloka was pronounced clearly. The Sanskrit teacher of the School was present once while the competition was in progress. Narayan was not aware of it. After listening to him recite slokas a few times, the Sanskrit teacher shouted at him, "What kind of farce is this? There are neither any words nor any sense in the slokas you are reciting. Let me hear you repeat the last sloka you recited." Narayan kept quiet. He didn't show any further bravado at the competitions after his bluff was called. At times, visitors to the School also participated in the competition. I remember a young nephew of Godavarish Babu who often participated in the competitions. He had a well-modulated voice and his recitations were brilliant. His name was Prabhakar.

Intra-class debates were held in the boarding every Sunday morning. Lectures were delivered in Oriya and English on alternate Sundays. Dayanidhi Mishra of our class excelled in Oriya debates. He became a civil contractor after passing the matriculation examination and earned a lot of money. A general meeting was held in the dining hall at least once every month. At times, Gopabandhu Babu delivered lectures at such meetings. Lectures were delivered by Nilakantha Babu or some other teacher if Gopabandhu Babu was not present. We followed their mannerisms when we spoke during debates. I am amused to recall how Jagannath Rath of our class imitated Nilakantha Babu at the debate. He would turn his face to the left and his head to the right, and his lips were parted widely as he

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spoke. He took a major part in the Congress movement later and spoke at many meetings. But he had outgrown the habit by that time. However, he had inherited the steely resolve and humility of Nilakantha Babu. I took more interest in the debating society than in the Slokanta competitions. But I had not been able to excel in any of these fields.

The students loved to imitate the teachers in the boarding. Teachers used wooden chappals. Students started doing the same. A pair of wooden chappals cost six paise those days. A pair cost eight paise if the knobs of the chappals were made of horn. Hari Babu (the Acharya) used wooden chappals most of the time. He used to cycle seven miles to Damodarpur (Chandanpur) market wearing his wooden chappals in order to get fish for Nilakantha Babu.

Students also imitated the teachers in covering their bodies with *gamchas.* Everybody went around bare-bodied except when one was in the class. The boys started putting a *gamcha* on their shoulder or on their back when they came out of their rooms. They tried to imitate either Hari Babu or Godavarish Babu or Basu Babu. A few boys imitated Godavarish Babu in wearing their clothes. I was a follower of Godavarish Babu.

The third way in which the boarders imitated the teachers was in leading an austere life. The boys tried to be one step ahead of the teachers in this regard. No one combed his hair. No one wore wide dhotis. No one wore extra white banians or shirts. In a way, it was forbidden to use oil on the body before taking a bath. The students prided themselves on not applying oil on the head and sporting short and unkempt hair. We were not affected by financial distress as austere living was considered to be ideal.

The fourth way in imitating the teachers was to make one's labour available for the common cause. The boys went around villages begging for rice. They helped ailing people in the community around them. They carried pot full of water to douse any fire that engulfed a house in the neighbourhood. They swept the school compound with brooms and swabbed the earthen floors of the hostel rooms and verandahs. They even cleaned the cooking pots. We were not very enthusiastic about these chores in the beginning. Gradually, we were taken over by a competitive spirit. It was accepted as an ancillary activity along with the studies. The teachers took an active part in these activities. We followed them.

The fame of the school increased chiefly because of the hostels. Visitors from outside were amazed to see the conduct of the students in the boarding. The School under the trees and the hostels made of clay complemented each other.

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# Suspicion

Many visitors came to the school. Many non-government people also came to visit apart from the director and the inspectors of the Education Department. Pandit Ramaballav Mishra was the Collector and District Magistrate of Puri at the time. He had joined as a Deputy and risen to the position of the Collector. He belonged to Uttar Pradesh. He had come once to the annual prize distribution ceremony in the School. He was healthy and handsome. An awning had been tied overhead near the gate of the boarding for the meeting. A number of distinguished persons had come from Puri and other nearby places. I recall that I had participated in the recitation and received a notebook as a present. However, what amuses me more now is the memory of us clapping every so often without understanding anything about the proceedings. After the meeting, the boys sat down on the open field where drills were held to eat some snacks and porridge. The collector moved around the rows of children along with Gopabandhu Babu. Ramaballav gave a clean chit to the school and the animosity of the *Gora Sahib* towards the school was lessened to a great extent. It was quite difficult for the government officials and the common people to believe that English could be taught in a school which could not boast of decent class rooms, smart students and well-dressed teachers. Hence, there was a suspicion everywhere that something sinister went on in the garb of running a school. There were several uprisings against the government after the partition of Bengal. Orissa was a part of Bengal till 1912. Bihar and Orissa separated from Bengal to form one province after that. However, the disturbances in Bengal started spreading to Orissa since Orissa had a stronger bond with Bengal rather than with Bihar with regard to language, religion, culture and tastes.

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Orissa continued to be with Bihar for the next twenty four years, i.e. from 1912 to 1936. But the bond between Orissa and Bengal had not been affected by that. The partition of Bengal took place in 1905. It was the harbinger of the partition of India in 1947. The objective of both these events was to kill the spirit of nationalism that was swaying the country. The British Empire was at the height of its glory in 1905. The fervour of patriotism in Bengal was also at its zenith at the time. 'What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow' was a saying that had gained currency during the period. An ordinance was promulgated for the partition of Bengal. There was mass uprising against the move. These were also reflected in Bengali novels and plays such as Anand Math, Mrinalini, Chandrashekhar, etc. written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. These added fuel to the fire. Public opinion and consciousness were aroused in the process. Young men and women turned terrorists and created fear in the minds of the foreign rulers. The uprising spread from Bengal to Bihar and Orissa. In the process, the Satyabadi school came under the scanner of suspicion.

The School had been named Victoria M.E. School after Queen Victoria when it had been started. Gopabandhu and his associates had no difference with the government at that time. The name of the School should have reassured the government. However, the authorities suspected that bombs were being manufactured in the forests surrounding the school. The government had not been able to imagine that human bombs were being created in the school premises. It was a natural outcome that the school was sacrificed to strengthen the non-cooperation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi, and several teachers and students willingly jumped into the fray.

The minor school was started in 1909 and the high school in 1912. The school was always under a cloud of suspicion right from its inception. The brahmins of the surrounding villages believed that the school had been founded to destroy their clan as the teachers of the school sported moustaches and people of all castes mingled together. Secondly, the mukti mandap of the Jagannath temple and dominant brahmins like Pandit Sadashiv Mishra Kabyakantha suspected that their dominance over the society would come to an end. Thirdly, it was also suspected that government schools in general and the Puri Zilla School in particular would lose their pre-eminence when it was noticed that boys came from far and wide to study at the School. Fourthly, the government and its lackeys (zemindars, *mahantas* and the bureaucracy) believed that their influence over the common men would be lessened upon seeing people

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with the highest educational qualifications serving as teachers for measly salaries. That these people rendered social service in the neighbouring areas and gained popularity among the common people added to their suspicion. These lackeys of the government could at best approach the sub-division officer to air their grievances. The sub-division officer was the highest ranking official in the area at the time. Such officers are at the lowest rungs of authority now. But they were the foundations of the British rule those days and were extremely powerful. Their recommendations were final. They had the ear of the district collectors. The collector was a British sahib. A native was rarely appointed as the collector of a district and that too as a stop-gap arrangement. The British sahib never went deep into any matter. His reports were based on superficial observations. The S.D.O. was his chief lackey. The police provided information to the S.D.O. as it pleased. Telegrams are sent these days to the President of India at the drop of a feather. It was difficult to lay one's eyes on the collector those days. Britishers who passed I.C.S. started their careers as S.D.O.s for a few days. The senior deputy in the sub-divisional headquarters was his real spy. He was a native who always spied against his countrymen. A few people were servile towards the government. They had mastered the art of sycophancy. The Satyabadi group kept its distance from such people. Hence allegations made against them before the senior deputy or the S.D.O. were lapped up by the latter. More spice was added to create a fear psychosis as the information moved higher up the echelon.

Gopabandhu tackled this problem in a different way. The *Mahanta* of the Emar *Math* in Puri was the chief of the *mahantas*. He praised the school publicly. The only motor car in Puri belonged to him. The inspectors and the director visited the school in that car. Madhu Barrister (Madhusudan Das) of Cuttack was full of praise for the school. The meeting of the Utkal Sammilani was held in Puri in December, 1913. A proposal was moved and seconded at the meeting by Fakir Mohan Senapati of Balasore, Brajasundar Das of Cuttack and Rajendra Narayan Bhanja Deo, the King of Kanika, lauding the establishment and management of the school. This had been approved unanimously. These three persons were in the good books of the government. Above all, as luck would have it, Ramaballav Mishra came as the Collector of Puri. He too commended the functioning of the School. Government's suspicions were laid to rest. The School rose one step further in esteem the day Gopabandhu Babu was elected to the Bihar-Orissa Council. Gopabandhu's attendant Rama was seen with a bunch of white envelopes

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on the verandah of the boarding the day the election results were known. In amazement, we asked him about the destination of so many letters. There was a contented smile on his face when he told us, "Babu has become a councillor. Haven't you heard about it?" I can still see that contented smile on Rama's face. The teachers were overjoyed and their reactions showed. We had not understood the significance of the election. I went away to another school at the height of fame of the School. It was the Chaibasa Zilla School. That was in 1916.

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# CHAIBASA

Father had not taken his family to his place of posting when he worked as asistant sub-inspector of schools in Soro and Basudevpur in Balasore district. He was transferred later to *gadjat* (princely states) areas. We belonged to areas that were formerly ruled by Mughals. These were known as Mughalbandi areas. The administrative systems of *gadjat* and Mughalbandi areas were different. Every *gadjat* had a king. The king ruled over his subjects. The kings were administrative heads. But the *gadjats* were actually administered by a political agent. The kings had to kowtow to them. There was an agency inspector for the education department, an agency conservator for the forests department and an agency engineer for the Public Works Department under the political agent. The *gadjats* were known as the dark areas. Father had not taken his family to his work place when he worked in kingdoms like Boudh, Athmallik and Pallahara. He talked about life in *gadjat* areas, the whimsical nature of kings and the mode of working of the officials when he came to the village on leave. Those areas were full of forests and the roads were highly unsafe. Father went to inspect schools in far flung areas either on foot or on horseback. He carried Mahula (the dried-up flowers of a tree) and honey when he came to the village. Mahula was used as one of the ingredients to make cakes at home. These cakes were sent to the homes of uncles in the villages. I remember eating different kinds of cakes at home with honey. Modern Oriya families seem to have forgotten the art of making different kinds of cakes these days. Several festivals were held in the villages during the course of a year. Cakes were always made on such occasions. Cakes were also made on other days. Housewives manage their affairs these days by buying *samosas* and sweets from the market. Educated housewives have

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no idea as to how to make different types of cakes. Village girls have also started following in their footsteps. No one would know the names of different kinds of cakes made in Oriya households were it not for the fact that these are still made in the Jagannath temple of Puri. Different kinds of *badis* (cakes of pasted pulses) and pickles that ordinarily formed part of Oriya cuisine and earned kudos for the skills of Oriya women are rarely seen these days. They are bought readymade from the market and stored in the kitchen now.

Father told us once that the King of Pallahara played *Holi* with his employees. Colours were splashed around till the afternoon. Everyone went for a bath after that in the King's pond. A bottle of fragrant oil, a cake of soap and a *gamcha* were provided to each person. Everyone wore new dhoti and *chaddar* after bath and partook of *prasad*. The King used his subjects virtually as bonded labour. They had to carry everything on their backs when the King went on tours. They had to provide grass for the horses if the King went on horseback. They had to remain in attendance in advance whenever the King went for hunting. Rich subjects contributed money. Respectable subjects were made to bend before the King. Others were required to provide hard labour for free. Father had gone to serve in the *gadjat* areas as the salaries there were slightly higher. However, he had had enough and wanted to leave after one year. But he had to stay in those areas for almost six years. I believed then that it was difficult for people from the Mughalbandi areas to adjust to the situation prevailing in the *gadjat* areas. At a later stage, there were uprisings in the princely states and these were merged with the other areas of the State. I recalled my childhood days and my beliefs about the *gadjat* areas at that time. Who knew at the time that I would be able to make a small contribution some day to the merger of the princely states with the other areas?

Father was transferred to Chaibasa, the headquarters of the Singhbhum district, in the early part of 1916. Sareikala and Kharasuan were the two chief Oriya-speaking, tax-paying states near Chaibasa. Kera was an Oriya zemindari located nearby. The Oriya king of Podahat had lost his kingdom. Most of the inhabitants in these areas spoke Oriya except for the tribal people belonging to the Ho community. The Kolhan area of Singhbhum district was mostly inhabited by the Hos. They spoke a language that was sprinkled with a bit of Oriya. Dhalabhumi area of Singhbhum district was mostly inhabited by the Oriyas. It was ruled by a king of the Dhal dynasty. Singhbhum was important because of the Tata Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur. There was only one high school

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in the district and it was located in Chaibasa. Most of the students in the school were Oriyas. But Hindi and Bengali were the mediums of instruction. The Oriya students of Dhalabhumi studied in the Bengali medium while the other Oriya students studied in the Hindi medium. Father went there as the Oriya teacher on the advice of Gopabandhu when it was decided to impart instruction in Oriya. That was a huge victory for the Oriyas in Singhbhum. We came to know later of the sacrifices made and the hardships undergone to achieve that. Father decided to take his family to Chaibasa after he joined the Chaibasa Zilla School. The family included mother, aunt, me and Khetramani, my sister.

That was my first long train journey. We boarded a passenger train from Sakhigopal station and alighted at Kharagpur. We stayed in the *musafirkhana* there for a few hours and boarded another passenger train to Chakradharpur. It took us more than two days to cover the distance. We were not bothered about spending two days on the narrow benches of a third class compartment. The pandemonium caused by people getting up and down at each station and the lively platforms had infused new life into someone who was until then confined to shuttling between Biswanathpur and Satyabadi. The musafirkhana was full of people when we reached Kharagpur. Some were sitting and some others were sleeping. A few kept moving around. Father found a bit of place for us somehow. But we were exhausted by then. People around us were talking in Hindi, Bengali and Telugu. We only looked at them wide-eyed without understanding anything. Father had been to Chaibasa twice earlier. He was used to the scenes. Rather than worrying about our uncomfortable situation, we were keenly waiting for the arrival of another train that would take us to our destination. Kharagpur was a busy railway station. Trains kept coming in and going out at regular intervals. The bells were ringing and the whistles were blowing constantly. There was a constant flow of passengers in and out of the musafirkhana. Coolies moved around. We were constantly on the lookout when our train would arrive. It was a novel experience for us to see so many people and such diversity in human beings and their luggage at one place. We had seen railway stations like Sakhigopal, Puri, Soro and Markona earlier. The platforms were quiet after a train arrived or left. We were usually not present when pilgrims thronged Puri. Hence, Kharagpur railway station seemed to us to be too huge, too diverse and too strange. Father arranged food for us. Sister was a widow. She took some *bhog* from Sakhigopal temple that she had carried with her and drank a bit of water. We felt conscious while eating since strange eyes were staring at us. But no one looked at the others at that place. Everyone was busy in his own

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affairs. Others glanced at us without seeing us. They heard us talking without understanding us. I was not aware of the geographic location of Kharagpur. I could not understand why we got down from the train at that place. I could not also fathom why we were waiting for another train at that place. It was beyond me to ask any question about these things. Father would have explained everything if I had the nerve to ask him. But that spirit of enquiry had not been roused in the education imparted in the Satyabadi School. The method there was to conform to everything and keep one's doubts to him.

Father woke us up to catch our train after getting the information from the coolies. We got up on the train relying exclusively on the help of the coolies. Father must have known that one could travel in higher classes by paying more. We did not know about it. It would not have made any difference even if we had known. One cuts his coat according to his cloth. Even the third class compartment was like a heaven for us considering our situation at the time. I have recalled the plight of that journey while travelling in an air-conditioned compartment or in an aeroplane later. I had been gratified to see the contentment on mother's face and the unspoken happiness of father when I had taken them in a first class compartment for the first time for a *tirth*. Father had only enquired about the cost of the tickets.

The train reached Chakradharpur around noon. We had not taken our bath for about two days and were almost starving. That station was also large. The musafirkhana was quite spacious. Since it was the last railway station of our journey, we felt strangely drawn towards it as we were towards Sakhigopal, our own railway station. Hence, we considered everything to be excellent there. But Chakradharpur seemed more unfamiliar than Kharagpur's station and musafirkhana. There were strangers in the railway stations familiar to us. But the language was not unfamiliar. In Chakradharpur, both were unfamiliar. Everyone spoke Hindi and we only stared at them like idiots. We could neither understand nor speak the language. The four of us—mother, aunt, sister and me—followed father blindly along with the luggage. We were even more amazed by what happened a little later.

Chaibasa was sixteen miles away from Chakradharpur. Buses did not ply at the time. The only vehicle available was known as push-push; a vehicle drawn by human beings. We had seen a bullock cart made of bamboos and palm leaves. But we were amazed to see a large wooden box being pulled by two men in front and pushed by two in the back. We came

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to know only later that it was called push-push. I saw a man-drawn bullock cart many years later while going from Puri railway station to Puri town. I recalled the push-push at the time. I also recalled the push-push when I saw a man-drawn rickshaw in Calcutta for the first time. The one drawing it and the one being drawn in it—both were human beings. The difference lay only in one's state in life. It was a common sight in towns to see people passing stool and other people carrying it on their heads. But one shivered while thinking about it. Slavery continues to be condoned in civilized society in the garb of socialism. The caste system in our country glorifies it in the name of religion. Unprecedented advances have been made because of science and technology. But it has only led to an unequal distribution of wealth. The slavery of the slave has turned into a necessity along with it. Everyone knows about it. But everyone feigns ignorance. Religious gurus argue that if the banyan tree and grass can co-exist in God's creation, there should be no problem in the privileged and the underprivileged living with each other. Of course, one can argue any which way he likes.

Father struck a deal with a push-push and we sat inside it. It ran for sixteen miles; human beings inside the cart and human beings below it. Night had fallen by the time we reached Chaibasa. There was a bridge on a river at the entrance to the city. The name of the river was Rod. It was difficult to pronounce. It also sounded odd. The word came from a tribal dialect. The area where the town started was known as Badi Bazar. It was another unpleasant name for us. Father had taken a house in that area. We had to take a narrow road leading towards the Rod River from the main road. We finally got down near a wooden gate on the left side of the road. All the exhaustion vanished when we entered our own house.

The compound was spacious and full of grass and bushes. It had a tiled roof. One half of the house belonged to us. The other half was occupied by Padmalochan Nayak, Mathematics teacher of Chaibasa Zilla School. He belonged to a village near Jaleswar in Balasore district. He had passed F.A. It was his first posting. Father and he were colleagues and spoke the same language. Both of them had taken the house on rent together. There was a main bed room, another small room, a verandah and a kitchen on each side. There was a small verandah on our side at the entrance that had been covered with wooden planks. Padmalochan Babu lived with Pulin Bihari, his younger brother. His family lived in the village.

We never expected that we would have the pleasure of having the company of such an agreeable neighbour so soon after our arrival. I was even more fortunate to get an Oriya-speaking classmate like Pulin. He was

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my friend, philosopher and guide in the new place. He was taller than me and slightly dark. He turned out to be a good friend.

There was no well in our compound or anywhere nearby. A woman carried water for us every morning and evening. I came to know the next day that father and I had to go to the Rod River to take our bath. It was the first time that I bathed in a river. There were large rocks inside the river that could be seen above the surface of water. The water was clean. People were there near the river almost throughout the day. I found women and girls rubbing clay on their heads while bathing. It was white clay, not black. It worked like soap. Those who came to the river carried water from the river in large earthen pots on their heads. I was scared to bathe in the river the first day. But I got over it soon and my attraction for the river increased day by day. Another attraction of the river was a Shiva temple on its bank on the other side of the city. It was a lonely, uninhabited place. The sunset got reflected on the shallow river with a bed of rocks. The scene was enchanting. Boys from the school rarely went there. I went there regularly to watch the scenery.

Father was waiting for me by the time I returned from the river the first day along with Pulin after having my bath. He was somewhat unhappy that I was late. But he did not say anything. I had a quick lunch and went with him to take admission in the school.

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# Zilla School

It was a novel experience to move from the Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya to Chaibasa Zilla School. It was an H-shaped pucca building atop a small hillock. The Headmaster's residence was near the school. There were two pucca hostels nearby. Farm land had spread on one side of the hillock. The railway tracks were laid later on that farm land.

Father took me to Jagdish Chandra Sengupta, the headmaster, on reaching the school. The headmaster of the Zilla School was a high-ranking government official at the time. He was considered to be one of the few distinguished personalities of the town. He was regarded as a respectable person in government as well as non-government circles. The headmaster was kind towards me as I was the son of one of the teachers of the school and I had come from afar. That gave a new meaning to my life. The headmaster asked my name in Bengali. It was the first time someone spoke to me in Bengali. No language was needed to tell my name. The second question was, "When did you arrive at Chaibasa?" It was beyond me to answer the question in Bengali. I answered, "Last night". It was the first time I spoke English by way of a conversation. I did not have any other way out and I had to speak in English. In later life, this quality helped me to set myself apart from others. I was enrolled in the fourth class of matriculation (eighth class now) and I went inside the classroom. I found that everything was beyond me in the class. The medium of instruction was Hindi. I could not understand anything. There were a few Bengali teachers. They spoke Hindi that was liberally laced with Bengali. I tried to answer the questions of teachers and students asked in either Hindi or Bengali by guesswork. My answers were in English, a language with which I was not very comfortable either. My sentences were usually

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fragmented. I must have been wrong often. There were a few Oriya students in the class. Some belonged to the royal families of Sareikala, Kharasuan, Kera, Icha and Dhalabhumi. Some others were from middle class families of those areas. They spoke a strange kind of Oriya. I could sense what they said. But it sounded extremely odd. Those Oriya boys were used to talking in Hindi and Bengali. The number of such Oriya students was not less. The reason was that, apart from the tribals, most of the original inhabitants of Singhbhum were Oriyas. People who spoke Hindi and Bengali were in a minority. They had come from Bihar and Bengal. However, they had established themselves in all spheres like government service, business and profession. Oriyas had not been able to distinguish themselves in any field. Oriya students were forced to study Hindi or Bengali as their mother tongue. Father had joined the school to teach Oriya in all classes once it was decided to teach Oriya as the mother tongue. There were very few Oriya students in each class. Most of the boys were Hindi-speaking. Bengalis came next but they were more dominant. I became friends mostly with the Bengali and Oriya boys. Bengali teachers also were kind to me. English, mathematics, history and geography were being taught by Bengali teachers. Those teachers mostly explained things in Bengali since Bengalis and Oriyas could easily understand Bengali. Hindi and Urdu speaking boys considered themselves to be inferior and only nodded at everything. Oriya students were taken more seriously by everyone in the school after Oriya was introduced as a mother tongue. It was indeed disgraceful for one to find that his mother tongue was not being taught at his school. It was even more disgraceful when this occurred in a district which boasted of a majority that spoke the language.

Singhbhum was a part of Bengal like the other districts of Orissa before 1912. It came under Bihar-Orissa when the latter separated from Bengal. But it remained under the Chhotnagpur Division along with districts like Ranchi rather than under the Orissa Division. Hence, it was considered to be a part of Bihar in the government circles. As a result, Oriya had no importance as a language starting from the primary schools of villages till the Zilla School. There were only a few Oriya primary schools in Sareikala and Kharasuan since these were tax-paying states and they were ruled by Oriya dynasties that were the inspiration behind such schools. There was no provision for Oriya to be taught either in middle or high school. Oriya classes were opened at the Zilla School only after agitations were held for a long time to get this kind of minimum benefit. Gopabandhu Dash, Pandit Krishna Chandra Acharya of Kharasuan, Purnachandra Tripathy, the only lawyer of Chaibasa, Kanhukishore Pani

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of Chakradharpur and the Zemindar of Kera had assumed important roles in such agitations. This was the first step in the Oriya movement in Singhbhum.

There were tribals too in our class. They belonged to the Ho community. Their language was naturally sprinkled with Oriya. They did not have a script of their own and hence they should have studied Oriya. But Hindi had been forced on them from their childhood because of the dominance of Bihari officials. They mostly kept to themselves in the Zilla School and talked among themselves in Ho. They rarely talked to others. But they used Hindi while doing so. They sat together in a group inside the classroom. They were very few in number by the time they reached the high school stage. None of them was in the two highest classes. There were only three of them in our class. They left the school after one year. The Ho's were weak in studies but frontrunners in sports and games. There was a separate hostel for them. I had a separate identity in the school from the first day. I was considered to be a very good student when I secured the first position in the first quarterly examination. Pasupati Sarkar was my nearest rival in the class. We competed with each other till the matriculation examination. Sometimes, he was first and I was second. Sometimes, our positions were reversed. He and his elder brother Narendra studied in the same class. The elder brother was no match for him in studies. Their father was a lawyer. He was very rich compared to us. Pasupati and I were friends till we completed B.A. from Ravenshaw College. I went to Patna to study M.A. Pasupati joined as a sub-deputy. We lost touch after that. I found Pasupati entering my bungalow once very hesitantly after I became a judge at the Patna High Court. I ran to him from the first floor of my residence till the gate and embraced him. Our memories were revived again after that. He wrote me a letter after returning from my house. He had written, "There was no difference between us when we studied together. But there is a great deal of difference in our status now. I had gone to Patna several times after you joined the High Court. But I had not met you as I was not sure that I would be able to meet you. I will be retiring from service very soon. I might not get another opportunity to come to Patna. Hence, I mustered enough courage in my last trip and met you. I was gratified. You are still the same Harihar."

My friendship grew with Himanshu Pratap Singhdeo of the Sareikala royal family and his elder brother Nagendra Pratap, Haradhan Dhabal Deo and Radhika Dhabal Deo of the Dhalabhumi royal family, and Tarapada Sarangi and Debendranath Dash of Dhalabhumi. They were all

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my classmates. Tarapada passed B.A. and took care of his household without opting for any job or profession. He was also intimately involved in protecting the interests of Oriyas in Singhbhum. We were good friends and our association continued till his untimely demise. We exchanged letters regularly. He belonged to Khandamauja. His son Dinesh Sarangi was an upcoming doctor, patriot, youth leader and one of the chief organizers of Singhbhum Utkal Sabha. I had promised to come to Tarapada's house a number of times. It was a pity that I could never make it. A high school started by him there is still in existence. One of the pillars of the Oriya movement broke when he died. Debendra worked as a lawyer at Jamshedpur. I lost touch with him.

Jogendra Narayan Acharya (son of Pandit Krushna Chandra Acharya) had appeared at the matriculation examination opting for Oriya as his mother tongue just before I joined the Zilla School. He was the first student from the Chaibasa School to do so. He had come to the school to meet the teachers shortly after I joined the school. All the students were impressed to see such a handsome, well-built person walking on the school verandah smartly attired in a dhoti, kameez, open-collar coat, shoes and socks. That scene has remained printed on my mind. I saw someone wearing garters on his socks for the first time that day. I recalled Jogen Babu when I wore garters on my socks for the first time eleven years later. Jogen Babu worked as a lawyer in Chaibasa. He took the leadership of Singhbhum Utkal Sabha and established the first Oriya high school there.

My intimacy had grown with two Oriya students studying in my senior class. One was required to maintain a respectable distance from senior students at the time. Dhanapati Dhabal Deo, the elder brother of my classmate Radhika, was a very affectionate person. He was known more for his merrymaking than studies. He wore a gold chain around his neck and was always smartly dressed. His hair was parted in the middle. He could not go beyond the school in studies. Another senior boy was Kaliprasanna Kabi. His title was Kabi and he was a poet indeed. The Padmanav Kabi family of Sareikala was famous. Everyone in the family was highly educated for generations. Kaliprasanna had the gift of the gab. He was also quiet proficient at writing poetry. He never allowed anyone to leave his presence without reciting a number of poems written by him. He too did not continue his studies after school. But he spent his entire life in literary creation. He also published a number of books. I had learnt the art of writing poems from him. I translated a few short English poems into Oriya and showed him. He encouraged me a great deal. I recall that he

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recited my first poem titled 'Tulasi' and praised it. I had composed very few poems during my school career. Not more than seven or eight. I cannot recall how good they were.

I had three Bengali friends among my classmates. They were Kalipada, Santosh and Gouranga. Kalipada became a doctor, Santosh a contractor and Gouranga a teacher. Another friend Mustafir was tall and heavily built. These friends got together under the trees during the recesses. We went at times to Tarapada's room in the boarding.

There was no restriction on going bare-bodied to the Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya. That was not possible in Zilla School. Everyone wore dhoti and kameez. Some wore coats. Panjabis were yet to come into vogue. My clothes included a dhoti and a kameez. But I was barefeet. I had one coat. I wore that rarely. I wore that coat while appearing at the first annual examination. I developed so much fondness for the coat when I stood first in that examination it that I wore it later during all examinations including the matriculation examination. The sleeves of the coat became short in four years. The length too became short and it became tight. Even then, I wore it at the time of examinations. I was scared that I might not do well at the examination if I did not wear it. This kind of superstition that I would be either first or second in the class if I wore the coat to the examination hall was indeed ridiculous. But such superstitions reinforced faith quite often. It could indicate a weak mind. Some applied *bibhuti* on their forehead before examinations, some carried leaves of the basil plant in their pockets and some others wrote '*Om*' or some such thing in the beginning of their answer scripts. We find the same thing in the society and in our homes too. People look at the almanac to determine the auspicious muhurat for every important thing. I have seen highly educated people perform religious rites and wait for more than two hours at the railway station waiting for a train. An eminent person who had obtained a degree from Germany made sure that there were no undesirable persons outside the door when he left home on some work. I've heard from him that he had failed in his missions whenever he had started out at inauspicious moments. I heard in my childhood that it was against the rule to sleep with one's head pointing towards north-west and it was inauspicious to start on a journey towards the north on Saturdays. A retired superintendent of police (Sri Laxman Mishra) who gathered a great deal of expertise in Ayurvedic treatment found that a great deal of poisonous germs were seen in *poi* (a kind of spinach) on the days when the almanac forbade eating it. Direct proof may not be furnished for many

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such prevalent practices. However, some kind of discipline is drummed into us in the process. Many such practices were adopted in the conduct of our lives and were considered to be inviolable. Some of these become religious practices in due course. This process is stronger in case of older civilizations. Scientific experiments have proved in recent times that a balance is struck between wind and rain in the skies by holding *yajnas* and *homas*. This prevents natural calamities like cyclones, droughts and floods. The benefits of brushing one's teeth with the sticks of *neem*, *shahada* or or *Bakul*, eating the leaves of the basil plant and the *Bel* tree in an empty stomach, and bathing early in the morning under the open sky have also been proved by research. It is not as if our religious practices as well as our daily rituals are without any base. Of course, many of these have been perverted over the years. In spite of all this, I now smile to myself when I recall my thoughtlessness in using the same coat and the same pen for four years. I would not have relied so much on an old, tattered coat if I had any faith in my ability at studies. Be that as it may, I distinguished myself in all the annual examinations and I passed matriculation examination in first division securing the second position in Bihar and Orissa under Patna University in 1921. I also won a scholarship in the process. I do not remember what happened to the coat and pen after that. I could have kept those as mementos if I had any sense. I always got wise after something had taken place.

One had to study an optional subject at the time in the two highest classes of the school. Instruction was being imparted in Mechanics for the first time. Many thought that I was a brilliant student when I was the only person in the class to have opted for it. It was easy to secure high marks in Mechanics as it was based on mathematics. It might have helped me secure a high position in matriculation examination.

Classes were held in the mornings every Tuesday as the weekly *haat* (market) was held on that day. The large ground in front of the jail was used for the purpose. Everything was sold there starting from spinach to goats, sheep and chicken. Mostly, Ho women carried things to the market place to be sold. Women of all ages displayed their wares at the place with well-oiled heads decorated with Palas and Kena flowers that had no fragrance. One had to either do his shopping on the day or wait for seven days for the next Tuesday. All provisions needed by a household were bought from the *haat*. I had never seen such a huge *haat* earlier. The noise from the *haat* was deafening as we returned home from the morning school. We had to go to the school from home through the *haat*. The place was deserted on other days. But there were numerous people and

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merchandise on the day of the *haat*. Buying and selling took place from the morning till evening. We moved around the *haat* for quite some time after the morning classes were over. Father and Padmalochan Babu bought their provisions from the *haat*. Rice and other stuff were available cheaply there. Earthen pots of various colours and sizes came to the place. They looked beautiful. The Ho men and women were very well-built. Their skin glistened like the exteriors of the pots they made. The women talked sweetly. The men were humble. The ears were automatically drawn towards them when Ho women sang in chorus while returning home from the *haat*. The songs were interspered with loud, intermittent laughter. The singers perhaps felt elated when some exhilarating stanzas were sung. They even embraced each other while singing. The dancing of Ho men and women was an unforgettable scene.

Sports meets were held once a year. The deputy commissioner, the superintendent, the forest officer, the engineer and the padre attended the meet with their wives. All these were English sahibs. People were more interested in seeing them rather than the sports. Other officers including our headmaster and the government pleader were also invited to the meet. Policemen displayed their expertise at various games before the audience. The Ho's displayed their skills with bows and arrows. Everyone was suitably impressed and clapped. I recalled an incident from my childhood on seeing their bows and arrows. Father had brought a bow and a variety of arrows for us while he was working at Athmalik. One of the arrows had a wooden tip. I played with that bow and arrow in our backyard. Once an old woman was sitting in the backyard of a house some distance away from our house. My arrow hit her. She screamed at me in anger and broke the arrow into pieces. I broke into a wail. It was not for the old woman hurling abuses at me but because my arrow was gone. Aunt tried to console me. She took me inside the house along with the broken arrow. My eyes turn moist when I recall her affection towards me. The Ho's danced on the ground in the evening. Everyone looked forward to this special day of the year. I watched the events throughout the day forgetting everything else.

I went to Chaibasa in 1916. The First World War had started in 1914. Saturday was a half day at the school. The last period was never held on Saturdays. Everyone gathered in the hall. The world map was hung on the wall and the headmaster pointed at various places on the map with a pointer to indicate the places where war was going on. This weekly lecture went on till the end of the war in 1918. It was compulsory for all the teachers and students to attend the class. The headmaster was a Bengali.

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He was not good at Hindi. He lectured in English. I listened eagerly to his lectures. I could not understand anything about the war. Other boys neither listened to the lecture nor understood anything. They only kept staring at the map. The inspector sahib had once come to this lecture on the war. He explained everything that day with the help of the map. His accent, postures and humour reminded me of Godavarish Babu at Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya. I wished I could speak English like that! But that was only wishful thinking.

The day the annual results were declared was another memorable day. We kept waiting for the time when the headmaster would emerge from his room. He carried a huge note book with him containing the marks of the students. The assistant headmaster Thakhary Babu accompanied him. He was tall, fair and bald. The class teacher was present in each class. The process started from the upper classes. The name of the promoted boy and the total marks secured by him were announced in the class. Such boys paid their respects to the three teachers and went to the higher class. The boys who failed left the class as soon as the headmaster departed. Most of them gave up their studies. Pasupati and I always waited with bated breath to find out whose name was announced first. It was the height of anxiety. My name was called first in a particular year but it was not announced that I had stood first in the class. Pasupati's name was called soon after and it was announced that we were bracketed first. When we stared uncomprehendingly at the headmaster, he announced that both of us had secured the first position. The two of us were jubilant. It was known later how both of us got the same marks. I had secured half a mark less than Pasupati when the marks secured in all the papers were totalled. The Headmaster added half a mark to make our marks equal. My surname started with 'M'. Hence, my name was announced first. His surname (Sarkar) started with 'S'. Hence, his name was called later. And it was announced that we were 'bracketed first'. In fact, he was first and I was second that year. In the later two years I pipped him to the first position. I had secured 3 and 5 marks more than him respectively. In the matriculation examination held in 1921, both of us secured the second position in first class. I have no idea if one of us led the other by half a mark or not in the examination. Both of us won scholarships for a period of two years.

There was great excitement in the school on the prize distribution day. The prize distribution ceremony in the Zilla School of a small town was a noteworthy event. There are high schools and colleges everywhere these days. There was not even one high school within a radius of a hundred

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miles those days. The only high school in Singhbhum district was in Chaibasa. Many people came to watch the proceedings. The English officers and their memsahibs came too. The teachers put on their best attire that day. The headmaster decked himself up for the occasion. Students performing on the stage were dressed in suitable clothes. Once I needed a pant, coat and tie for the role I was playing. Padmalochan Babu gave his only pant, coat and tie to me for the purpose. I do not know how I went to the prize distribution ceremony wearing those for they were three times too large for me.

Only English books were given as prizes for recitation and acting. Oriya books were given as prizes for competitions in the Oriya section. I carried a load of books with me when I returned from the ceremony. Now I find that soaps, talcum powder, snow, water bottles and tiffin boxes are given away as prizes in the schools.

Inspector Whitmore Sahib had once come to the prize distribution ceremony. The school was spick and span. Everyone was smartly dressed. Whitmore Sahib was supposed to arrive from Ranchi. He was driving an old car. His car gave trouble while he was still 13 miles away from Chaibasa. He borrowed a bicycle from someone and pedalled all the way to the school to reach at the right time. What sincerity! What a sense of time! High ranking officers are not bothered these days about such niceties. Their examples are emulated by those under them.

I was not proficient at sports. I never won a prize in the sports events. I won all my prizes for examination results, recitations and debates. Pasupati was also like me. A good student did not have time for games or anything else at the time. Athletes got prizes. But they were not favourably looked upon. I remained so ignorant about sports and games throughout my life that I remained indifferent while football and cricket matches in Barabati Stadium attracted thousands of people. I listen like an idiot when my grandson gives expert comments about the proceedings of a match. A void remained in life's experiences. Things did not improve either when I went to the college. I remained indifferent towards sports. When I go these days as a guest to the sports meet of a school or college, I distribute the prizes with a smile on my face. But there is a sense of embarrassment deep within me.

Five years passed smoothly at the school as far as the examinations were concerned.

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# Five Years in Chaibasa

Our house in Badi Bazar was not just a place to reside in. One of the major agenda of the Oriya movement in Singhbhum was to ensure that Oriya was taught at the Chaibasa Zilla School. It was natural to expect that father would be directly and indirectly associated with the movement since Oriya was taught in the school for the first time after he came. People taking an active part in the movement visited our house to hold discussions with father. Pandit Krushna Chandra Acharya of Kharasuan, Kahnukishore Pani of Chakradharpur, Padmanav Kabi of Sareikala, Purna Chandra Tripathy of Chaibasa (a lawyer by profession) and Brajamohan Tripathy, a timber merchant visited our house whenever they found it convenient. The ouside verandah was covered with wooden planks to serve as an extra room. A cot had been laid in that room. I sat on a thin tarpaulin spread on the floor for my studies. Father usually sat on the cot and did his work. The visitors too sat on it. We did not have any chair or bench in the house. Any young man accompanying me was asked to sit on the floor with me. I did not have any right or qualification to take part in the discussions to protect the interests of Oriyas in Singhbhum. But I listened to everything avidly. Father did not approve of my presence at such discussions. He wanted me to concentrate on my studies. But was it possible? Gradually, I turned into a silent participant in the discussions. Very few school-going boys were fortunate enough to get such an exposure. My interest in public life started at a young age as a result.

I was busy in my studies the day Pandit Krushna Chandra Acharya visited our house for the first time. He asked me if father was at home. I paid my respects and said yes. Then he asked me my name. I answered, "Harihar". He commented, "Just Harihar?" I said, "You know the surname

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of my father. Why should I add Mahapatra to my name?" He was suitably impressed and told father when he came from inside the house, "He's a clever boy." Pandit Acharya had remembered the incident for a long time. He visited our house often when I practiced law at Cuttack. He used to narrate the incident mirthfully before others. Intimacy and friendship developed between our families. We visited his elder son Prasanna Acharya after he joined as a deputy magistrate and lived in Sen-Tola near Badi Bazar. His second son Surendra worked as a doctor at Cuttack. The third son Jogendra was the first student in father's Oriya class. His grandson (Prasanna Babu's son) Sachidananda came from Cuttack to practice law and later became a judge in the High Court. Pandit Krushna Chandra spent his entire life in social service and died at Puri. It was an illustrious family. Kahnukishore Pani of Chakradharpur was another pillar of the Oriya movement. His descendants excelled themselves in their chosen fields. Bijay Pani made a name for himself in Congress politics. Rama Pani was a leading businessman. The descendants of Padmanav Kabi also distinguished themselves in the field of education and politics.

Gradually, our residence turned into an indirect centre for the Oriya movement. Radhanath Babu (who later became the Editor of 'The Samaj') came to Chaibasa at the time to work as a clerk in the forest office. He was a handsome person and had bright, young eyes. His face glowed. I was struck by his appearance when I laid my eyes on him and the memory still lingers. He might not have noticed me then as I was a lot younger than him. However, my intimacy grew with him when I came to practice law at Cuttack. In the process, a strong bond also developed with 'The Samaj' that continues till today. Intimacy also grew between our families. We spent a lot of time together discussing various problems of the country. I lived in our old College Street residence at the time. The two of us sat on a bed munching snacks and talked for hours. I was treated very well when I went to his house. Snacks and sweets would arrive in no time. The added incentive of getting the freshest news about everything was also there. Our friendship gradually extended to close links between our families. I have been consoled by his kind words and unadulterated love and affection at the time of bereavements in the family. We also did some work together in public life. We have leaned on each other whenever 'The Samaj' or the Satyabadi group was attacked politically. Our relations became especially close towards the end of 1932. I was amazed and hurt when I found that Radhanath Babu distanced himself from me after he became a minister in 1952. But my affection and regard for him did not lessen.

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A majority of the inhabitants of Singhbhum were Oriyas leaving aside the Hos. However, there was no scope for their children to learn Oriya alphabets. There were very few primary schools. The medium of instruction in all the schools was Hindi. There was no place for Oriyas in government service, let alone business or profession. They lived as guests in their own houses and were a deprived lot. Gopabandhu Dash had taken the leading role in remedying this situation. He was the elected member of the Bihar-Orissa Council from 1917 to 1920. He returned from Patna to Satyabadi *via* Chaibasa. He stayed in Chaibasa for a few days in a house in front of the residence of Purnachandra Tripathy, the lawyer. Everyone gathered there. I too went there along with father. I sat there like an uninvited guest and listened to the discussions like an idiot. At times, Gopabandhu Babu's jokes amused everyone. Once someone wondered how Gopabandhu Babu's visiting card would be sent in advance when he went to visit the deputy commissioner. The bungalow of the deputy commissioner was located at a distance from the main gate. Gopabandhu Babu would go till the main gate in a horse-drawn cart. Then he would have to walk to the bungalow. Everyone wanted that he should sit in the cart and send his visiting card through someone. He should go to the bungalow only when he was invited. Or he should go to the bungalow in the cart if he was permitted by the sahib to do so. Purna Babu had arranged the cart. It offended everyone that the leader of the Oriyas and council member would have to send his card through a peon and wait for the Sahib's call standing on the verandah of the bungalow. If someone could accompany Gopabandhu Babu, he would go inside the bungalow. But no such man was available. Gopabandhu Babu heard everyone patiently and finally said, "Why make a fuss about such a small thing? I will get down from the cart and go inside the bungalow as a peon to hand over my card to the office peon. I will come back after that and wait in the cart. I will go to meet the sahib when he calls for me." Everyone laughed. I have no idea how the meeting took place the next day.

The headmaster sent a notice one day that all class teachers would have to send a statement showing the number of Oriya students in each class, the number opting for the Oriya class and the number opting for Hindi or Bengali class. Everyone wondered why this statistics was needed. We came to know that Council Member Gopabandhu Dash would come visiting the school the next day and that he had asked for the statistics. Gopabandhu Babu reached the school at 11 A.M. the next day. The Headmaster took him to each class. His appearance that day is still framed inside my mind. He was fair-complexioned and he wore a smile on his

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bearded face. He had put on a black trouser, a close-neck black coat, an upper cloth around his neck and a black turban. The fair face shone amidst everything black. The headmaster treated Gopabandhu Babu with as much respect as he showed to the inspector sahib. He took him around the classrooms, hall and office. The Oriya students felt ten feet tall watching the scene. There was a lot of excitement in the school that day. The icing on the cake came when the next day was declared as a holiday as a mark of respect to Gopabandhu Babu.

It was decided that Radhanath Babu would resign from his government job and go to Satyabadi to work with Gopabandhu Babu when the latter had come to Chaibasa once. Radhanath Babu joined the Satyabadi press according to Gopabandhu Babu's instruction in 1919 October. 'The Samaj' had been published as a weekly that month (04/10/1919) with Gopabandhu as its editor. Radhanath Babu moved to Puri and finally to Cuttack from Satyabadi along with the Satyabadi press and 'The Samaj'. He later became the manager of the press and ultimately the editor of 'The Samaj'. The newspaper was published from Cuttack with effect from July 2, 1927.

A gentleman reached our gate one evening wearing a trouser and a coat. I was on the other side of the gate. He asked in English, "Is this Kashinath Babu's house?" When I nodded, he asked again, "How are you related to him? Son?" I said yes and informed him that father was not at home. I opened the gate and requested him to come inside. But he continued to stand outside. He asked me several other questions in English. He asked, "What do you want to be in life?" I answered, "I want to be a lawyer." He again asked, "Why not a doctor?" The conversation continued for a while. Before returning, he asked me to inform father that B.N. Mishra, Barrister had come. I was startled out of my wits. It was not everyday that I had the opportunity of meeting and talking to such an eminent person. I wanted to become a lawyer and council member like Gopabandhu Babu. I gave expression to my thoughts that day. I had no idea what a lawyer or a council member did. But it was not possible to rein in one's aspirations. As luck would have it, I became a lawyer ultimately and got an opportunity to sit beside the same B.N. Mishra (Bishwanath Mishra) at the same table in the High Court Bar Association. We had reminisced about the incident near the gate of the Chaibasa house at that time and both of us were amused. The memory of that small incident is so clear in my mind that I still remember the conversation that took place between us that day.

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No Oriya family lived permanently in Chaibasa. Brajamohan Tripathy, a timber merchant, came to live with his family near Saheb Bandha (a pond) at the other end of the town. Father went to his house to teach his son. I do not remember how much money he was getting for acting as a private tutor. Father took an advance from him when he was in need of money. Tripathy's wife was a very affectionate woman. She was extremely kind to me. She always made me eat something whenever I went to her house. Tripathy always provided financial help to the Oriya movement. Purnachandra Tripathy was another Oriya who lived with his family. He had come to Chaibasa to practice law. Most of the other inhabitants of Chaibasa were Biharis and Bengalis who had come from outside. One rarely came across someone talking in Oriya at the marketplace. The lawyers, doctors and contractors were all Bengalis. All the shopkeepers were Biharis. No one would believe Singhbhum to be a district with a majority of Oriyas if one looked at Chaibasa. The villages were almost entirely inhabited by Oriyas. The Ho's also spoke Oriya. It was some kind of a challenge for me to have spent five years of my youth in such adverse conditions. I also believe that it helped boost my self-confidence.

There were four '*deras*' in the town. A remarkable house was known as a 'dera'. The four 'deras' belonged to the royal families of Sareikala, Kharasuan, Icha and Chakradharpur. The families and employees of the royal families lived in those 'deras'. Children of all the royal families except for the Chakradharpur royal family lived in their respective 'deras' and studied at the Zilla School. Dhalabhumi did not have a 'dera' of its own. Children of that family stayed in the boarding. I went at times to the Sareikala '*dera*' as Himanshupratap, Nagendrapratap, Sudhanshupratap and Kaliprasanna Kabi lived there. Because of our close friendship, Himanshu had taken me along with him to Sareikala once on the occasion of *Makar Sankranti*. Father had given his permission very reluctantly for the purpose. Makar Sankranti was the chief festival at Sareikala. Everyone wore clothes dipped in turmeric water. A lot of merrymaking with songs and dances went on in the palace at the time. Feasts were held in the palace and on the bank of the river. Father was not amused when I returned four days later although I was supposed to return after two days.

Chakradharpur 'dera' was in a neglected state. Its king had been dethroned by the British government as the royal family had revolted against the British. The 'dera' was located near our Badibazar house. An old woman lived there and sold *murhi*. I went there every morning to buy

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*murhi* of one paisa from her. That was enough to serve as breakfast and snack for one day along with a bit of *gur.* There was an open field behind the Chakradharpur '*dera*'. The Rod River flowed beyond the field. I was thrilled to sit there and watch the sunset.

A teacher called Mohammed Ibrahim joined the school after a few days. He was a muslim from Orissa. He had passed B.A. It was his first job. He was soft spoken and affectionate. He and father became friends from the first day. He came often to our house. A young sub-deputy named Faimul Haq was appointed at Chaibasa. He belonged to Salepur near Cuttack. He was extremely fair complexioned and slightly plump. He came to our house one Sunday morning a few days after joining in his job. He made everyone laugh when he talked. He started in Hindi but later switched to flawless Oriya. He stayed in a newly constructed house not far from our house. He went often on tours. He came regularly to our house when he returned from tours. At times, he carried bananas and papayas from the villages for us. I had gone to him for a few days to study English. Faimul Haq had gone to his village on leave once when mother was in our village. One afternoon he unexpectedly arrived at our house by the 4 P.M. train. Father and I were at Chaibasa at the time. It was natural for mother and aunt to have been taken unawares. A muslim as a guest in a brahmin *Sasan* village was something unprecedented. Arrangements were somehow made for his food and stay in our house for the night. My sister Khetramani made things smoother. But who was going to clean up the leftover of a Muslim? Our part-time maid refused to do it. So did the *Bauri* fellow who lived at the back of our house. Khetramani was already asleep by the time. Aunt was a widow. Mother changed her clothes and picked up the plates to clean them in the backyard. The guest was not in the least aware of the inconvenience that he had caused. Another problem arose when he changed into a *lungi* in the morning and wanted to take a bath in the pond. People talked in hushed voices seeing a muslim taking bath in the pond near the temple along with the brahmins without any reservation. The brahmins moved away from him. The muslim was handsome and a sub-deputy. Hence, no one said anything openly. But the discontent was clear to see. People talked against our household for a number of days after Faimul Haq returned from the village. This had taken place sixty years ago. These days, everyone wears a lungi in the *Sasan* villages. It is not unusual to find muslim guests in brahmin households these days. But mother and aunt deserve kudos for the way they took care of the muslim guest that day. Hindus may be conservative on the surface. But they are liberal to the core. Haq Saheb narrated about his trip to our

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village to father with a lot of gusto when he returned to Chaibasa. We were amazed to hear about it and wondered about the states of mother and aunt. The Oriya community shrank again into a shell after the transfer of Mohammed Ibrahim and Faimul Haq.

Deputy Magistrate, Ahed Sahib came towards the last part of my stay at Chaibasa. He had a great deal of experience in administration. He was tall, strongly-built and a workaholic. It would not have been possible for us to get acquainted with such a high-ranking officer were it not for the fact that he belonged to the Cuttack City. Ahed Sahib was a friendly person. He visited me several times after I constructed my house at Chandni Chowk. He had congratulated me profusely after I became a judge in the High Court. He had a huge house near Cuttack Chandi square. The government took it over for the women's college. He had contested the decision till his death. Garrett Sahib was the deputy commissioner while he served at Chaibasa. Garrett Sahib served as a district collector in Orissa earlier. He knew a bit of Oriya and was sympathetic towards the Oriyas. Ahed Saheb could persuade Garrett Sahib to take certain steps to protect the interests of Oriyas since he enjoyed his confidence. What was not possible earlier because of the indifference of Scott Sahib became possible during the tenure of Garrett Sahib.

At this time (1918), Pandit Godavarish Mishra came to Chakradharpur at the instance of Gopabandhu Dash to start an Oriya High School. It was extremely difficult those days to set up and run a school. There was stiff opposition to the move from the Biharis. But Dinanath Pandey, a Bihari businessman, was impressed by Godavarish Babu's personality and allowed him to start the school in his double-storied building. There was no doubt that the Oriyas felt quite confident of themselves after Godavarish Babu moved permanently to Singhbhum. But he had to face problems from several quarters. He ran into a lot of problems because of lack of funds and cooperation from other people. We were in constant touch with him after he came to Chakradharpur.

It had been decided that the Utkal Sammilani would meet at Chakradharpur in December 1920. Utkal Chhatra Sammilani had its session on the same pandal those days after the session of the Utkal Sammilani was over. Two reception committees were formed for the two separate sessions. Godavarish Babu wrote me to collect some money for the Chhatra Sammilani. I took the assignment seriously and collected some money from the Oriya students. A few non-Oriya students also promised to contribute some money and their names were listed. I gave

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handwritten receipts after collecting money. The headmaster came to know of it. The congress movement had started in the country by that time. The government employees were even more worried about treason than the government itself. The headmaster had no doubt that such open collection of donations in a government school for a political meet by the son of a teacher of the school was a culpable act and extremely dangerous for the school. He called father and warned him. Father was surprised to hear of it as he did not know anything about it earlier. I showed the letter of Godavarish Babu, the list of persons who had donated money and the receipt book when father asked me about it the same evening. Father was in an awkward situation. He supported the cause inwardly. But he had to face the wrath of the headmaster. The boss could not be dismissed lightly, be it a government or non-government job. The headmaster summoned me to his office the next day and reprimanded me by saying, "So, you are a leader now?" He wanted me to explain why I collected donations from fellow students without his permission. Two days later, he summoned me again and confiscated the receipt book and the collected money from me. He also boxed my ears. He called the boys who had donated money and rebuked them. He also returned their contributions to them. I felt humiliated and lost face before the students. The concerned boys got together during recess that day and handed over the refunded amount (thirty seven rupees only) to Kalipada Dey, a flambouyant classmate, to send it to Godavarish Babu by money order. I was again held in esteem by everyone. I wrote a letter to Godavarish Babu informing him of everything. Neither father nor the headmaster came to know of the money order. It was not possible on my part to go to the Chakradharpur Chhatra Sammilani or the utkal sammilani under the prevailing circumstances. The Utkal Sammilani was held on December 31, 1920 at Chakradharpur with Jagabandhu Singh presiding over the session. Singh was a lawyer of Puri. He was also a social worker and litterateur who later became a congress leader. Gopabandhu Dash and his associates returned from the congress conference at Nagpur and got the proposal relating to the non-cooperation movement passed in the utkal sammilani with a majority. Biswanath Kar and his associates opposed the move and left the meeting in protest. The *chhatra sammilani* was also concluded along the same lines. I had not even dreamt at the time that I would have to repeatedly take part in the meetings of the utkal sammilani some day or assume the responsibility of the Secretary of the utkal sammilani for more than one year or preside over the annual convention of the chhatra sammilani at Cuttack in 1936. Improbable events take place at times.

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There was the occasion to be spiritually enlightened too along with the studies and political consciousness. The books relating to Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda which I had received as prizes had provided this opportunity. I read those books eagerly and believed that the ideals narrated in the books should be emulated. A fond desire had grown in the mind to join the Ramakrishna Mission after completing my studies. The first picture that I had pasted on the wall of my house was that of the Paramahansa.

The Headmaster was transferred in my last year at the school. A self-indulgent, muslim gentleman came in place of Jagdish Sengupta. Jasmine flowers were spread on his bed in summer. He slept on the flowers. He was always immaculately dressed. He was a strict disciplinarian in the school. He was gentle and affectionate towards the boys. One had to cross our class first while coming to the school from his residence. A few boys were talking one day near the teacher's table before the classes were scheduled to start. I had been sitting on the chair earmarked for the teacher. We had not seen the headmaster coming towards the school. He entered the classroom and simply said, "Mahapat, first deserve, then desire." He went away after saying that. He used to call me 'Mahapat'. That sentence got stuck in my mind and acted as an ideal throughout my life. How easily he gave the message that I should not have sat on the chair meant for the teacher when I did not have the eligibility to become a teacher! Several problems arise in our society because we try to grab name and fame in different spheres without having any genuine claim for such accolades.

Our stay in Chaibasa came to an end in February 1921 after I appeared at the matriculation examination at Purulia and returned. Purilia was the nearest examination centre for Chaibasa Zilla School. We stayed at the hostel of the Purulia Zilla School. Priyanath Sen (there may be a mistake in the name), the headmaster of the school, was the centre superintendent. He came every morning to the hostel to enquire about our welfare. He was a gentleman to the core. One day he told us in our room, "God is known as Satchidananda. Do your work with a virtuous mind and joy. Leave the results in the hand of God." The essence of this sentence has inspired me all along and I have received a lot of consolation and benefit from it. Priya Babu resigned later from service and joined the congress to establish himself as an idealistic leader. I had the opportunity of eating biscuits for the first time in my life at Purulia. I bought a razor and a comb from the money that I managed to save from the trip. I had never combed my hair until then. It was a taboo in the Bana Vidyalaya to comb one's hair. Father too looked upon it as a display of vulgar luxury during the student career.

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Father was always neat and clean. He shaved himself. Of course, there were certain days of the month when it was forbidden to shave and he skipped shaving on those days. He used to comb his hair carefully. It was not a case of luxurious living. But he never neglected hygeine. He rarely scolded me. His unhappiness was expressed by way of his silence. I was always careful not to ruffle him in any matter.

We came to Chakradharpur from Purulia by train and took a bus to Chaibasa. Push-push carts were available. However, bus service had been started and most people preferred that. Father was waiting for me when the bus reached Badi Bazar at 8 P.M. We came home. We had been invited for dinner that evening. Father took me there. Mother and aunt were at the village at the time. Father and I stayed by ourselves most of the time at Chaibasa in the five years that we spent there. We cooked food in an ickmic cooker most of the time. Father put the cooker on the hearth and left for tuition. I did it at times when father was absent. I led a lonely life during my childhood. That is perhaps the reason for my shyness.

We returned home that evening from dinner at about ten. I had never gone out for dinner during my five year stay at Chaibasa. Perhaps the only exception was to go to Sareikala for Makar Sankranti. As I took off my shirt to go to sleep, father broke into a sob all of a sudden and said, "Hari, Khetramani passed away!" I fell from the skies. My sister Khetramani was younger to me. She was beautiful and in good health. She had married only a year ago. Her in-laws lived at Bira Purusottampur. Her husband Nilakantha looked after farming in the village. They were financially comfortable. Khetramani had loose motion for a day and passed away. The news had reached father after I had left for Purulia. Father tried to comfort me unsuccessfully. What could I tell him? Both of us cried and consoled each other. I never knew that my last day at Chaibasa would be so plunged in grief. We left for the village the next day by taking a bus for Chakradharpur. I could not meet any of my friends before leaving Chaibasa. I could not go to the *Shiva* temple which was my favourite spot. I could not meet any of my teachers to seek their blessings. I left Chaibasa with a broken heart staring at the lifeless face of father. The last look at the Rod River as our bus plied over the bridge stirred me in a strange way. The fun and frolic of the last five years were a distant memory.

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# Marriage

This important event took place in a very simple way while I was studying at Chaibasa. It is impossible to imagine now that a fifteen year old boy would marry a nine year old girl. But marriages were solemnised at the time at even lesser age. Fathers looked for grooms for their daughters when they reached the age of seven or eight. The groom had to be from the same caste and clan. I had heard that proposals had come for me from Birapratappur and Sriramachandrapur. I saw those girls after my marriage. Another proposal came almost at the same time for the eldest daughter of Narahari Choudhury of the Choudhury family of Bhingarpur. They were our front door neighbours. Manika and Nisha, the two sisters of Narahari Choudhury, had married the two brothers Jagannath Mahapatra and Balabhadra Mahapatra who belonged to our clan. Perhaps the two sisters had informed their brother about me. It was not considered proper in our clan to enter into matrimonial relations with someone from the Choudhury family. It was ground enough to be censured by the village folks. In spite of it, father and Kalia Uncle (Biswanath Mishra) agreed to the proposal after much consultation. My maternal grandfather belonged to our village. He belonged to a lower clan. Pindika Mishra, the father of my maternal grandfather, had performed a *yajna* to glorify his clan. Hence, it was possible for my father to marry in that family. It was settled that I should marry in the Bhingarpur family rather than in Birapratappur or Sriramachandrapur as Narahari Choudhury met father several times entreating him to accept the proposal. He had also promised to provide financial help for my higher studies if necessary. The proposal was being discussed regularly in the house and I was aware of everything. I was sure that I was destined to marry the girl when I heard

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that her name was Haripriya. There was a great similarity between our names which was rare. There was a perfect match between our horoscopes. To marry off a girl, proposals were sent to several families. Sometimes, the problem lay with the clan. Sometimes, the horoscopes did not match. If the horoscopes matched, the girl might not be up to the mark. A groom's family could be dropped from any further consideration if they were not financially comfortable. Several such things were considered before finalizing a proposal. By the grace of God, the proposal from the Choudhury family was accepted. It is difficult to say whether this occurred because of the bride's luck or the groom's luck or the luck of their parents. Everything was settled and the marriage was solemnised when we had come to the village during the summer vacation of 1919. The bride was nine; the groom was fifteen. Their role in the marriage was secondary. The marriage was solemnised between the two families. Everything took place by the dictates of the elderly people in the two families.

I sat in a palanquin, and father, uncles and others sat on bullock carts to set off for the marriage. We stopped at Dandamukundapur to bathe and eat. Then we started for Bhingarpur. We stayed elsewhere in Bhingarpur for the night and started for the marriage *pandal* in the morning. I was not in the least aware of the importance of the event in spite of all that clamour around me. I had no idea that a new chapter of life was unfolding before me. We were scheduled to return the next day. The bride and I were in the palanquin. We stopped at Saradeipur in the afternoon for lunch and started on our way again. It was ten in the night by the time we reached our village. I can hazily recall the half-asleep bride standing like an idol with her head lowered among the women who had surrounded her. She had perhaps been tutored at her home to act like a statue upon arrival at the groom's house. I had tried to talk to her on the way back. But she had kept mum all throughout. That too had perhaps been doctored to her by her family. My aunt Mani Nani turned as affectionate towards her as she was towards me. She unburdened her from the crown on her head. She lifted her veil and showed her beautiful face to everyone. The bride went to hide herself in the house of our front-door aunt on the eighth day of the marriage. It was forbidden for our family members to look at her face that day. She returned to our house the next day. She stayed for a day and returned to her village. The marriage ceremony was thus over. She returned to our house in the summer of 1923 at the age of 13 when I was studying in Second Year I.A. at Cuttack. We were aware of each other by that time.

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The life of a daughter-in-law in a conservative Oriya family was not easy those days. One had to go through the experience to know what it entailed. A woman is a wife first and a daughter-in-law next after marriage these days. It was just the opposite those days. Meeting one's wife during the daytime was reprehensible and inappropriate those days, let alone talking to each other. No one dared to go against this rule as a daughter-in-law was considered shameless and the son as scandalous otherwise. It was forbidden for the daughter-in-law to show her face during the day or look at the elderly members of the family. The daughter-in-law was supposed to finish her daily chores and sweep and swab the house before sunrise. She had to wait for the instructions of the mistress of the house after that. Mother was the mistress of our house. But Pisi lorded over everything. She had become a widow in her childhood and stayed in our house all along. She commanded the respect of everyone in the family because of her conduct and disposition. She was kind towards the daughter-in-law. As a result, the latter was not subject to all the usual restraints that a new daughter-in-law had to put up with. Even then, certain basic rules had to be observed. The son studied at the college, but he was a non-earning member of the family. It was natural that the daughter-in-law had to be subservient under such circumstance.

Our family was censured by the village folks during my marriage as we had entered into matrimonial alliance with the Choudhury family. Lokanath Mahapatra, who was the nephew of Narahari Choudhury and the first person in our village to pass M.A., had strongly supported the marriage. However, his stance changed after my wife came finally to live with us. Father had invited Pandit Nilakantha Dash, Acharya Harihar Dash, Basudev Mahapatra (teacher), the doctor at Satyabadi, the police officer and the station master among others for the marriage feast. People from the village were also there. The Satyabadi people sat together in a room to have their food. Others sat elsewhere. Food was being served at both the places simultaneously. There were two non-brahmins (kayasthas) among the gentlemen from Satyabadi. Village folks were seen the next morning discussing the heinous crime our family had committed by making brahmins and non-brahmins eat at one place. It was further alleged that the sacred threads of the brahmins were desecrated in the process. It was argued by us that the gentlemen from Satyabadi had sat together at a different place. This was, however, countered by saying that food had been served to both brahmins and non-brahmins using the same pots and spatulas. We came to learn with regret that the nephew of Narahari Choudhury had initiated such discussion and persuaded others

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to join in the crusade against us. He and others changed their sacred threads outside their doors in order to deliberately slight us. The whole thing had been stage-managed to make sure that we witnessed the scene. A few of them proposed to ostracize us. But they did not get enough support for it. Lokanath Mahapatra might never have imagined that non-Oriya and non-Brahmin girls would later come to his own house as daughters-in-law. The villagers too might never have imagined that the sons and grandsons of the daughter-in-law from Bhingarpur would some day marry Bengali, Christian and Kayastha girls. Just as the society had shrunk because of conservatism, so did it become liberal in due course when it was exposed to the outside world.

Father-in-law had four daughters: Haripriya, Krushnapriya, Laxmipriya and Avanti. He had no son. The second daughter had been married off in Kashipur, the third in Sripurushottampur and the fourth in Biranarasinghpur. The other sons-in-law were not much educated. The alliances had been chiefly decided on the basis of clan. Mother-in-law died within a year of the marriage of her eldest daughter. Except for his mother, there was no one else in father-in-law's house to take care of the girls. Haripriya was extremely young at the time. Still, she had to take the responsibility of her three sisters as also the household from that young age under the supervision of her grandmother. She also had to make all the necessary arrangements for the pujas performed by her grandmother. In the process, she herself turned deeply religious and a devotee of Sri Ram. All the members of our family followed her and were cast in the same mould in due course.

Father-in-law had adopted the second son of his younger brother. He married again. Two daughters and a son were born to him. He died in 1933 December. He was studious and was active in the Indian National Congress. He was known as a progressive person among the Choudhurys as he read Bengali newspapers and persuaded people to operate the charkha in their houses. He also contributed liberally for common causes. He was proficient in managing his *zemindari*. Choudhurys had shares in undivided zemindaris apart from their own *zemindari*. These were being managed by a common manager under the supervision of the district judge of Cuttack. Banabihari Palit had served as the common manager for a long time. Narahari Choudhury had filed a suit in the court of the sub-judge of Cuttack for the division of the undivided *zemindaris*. It was a famous suit in the Cuttack court and the trial had gone on for a long time before it had been disposed of in 1936. The Choudhury family had houses in Puri,

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Bhubaneswar, Prayag (Allahabad), Mathura, etc. as undivided property. No other family in Orissa could boast of such property. The houses at Prayag and Mathura were taken over by the local *Pandas* (priests) because of mismanagement and internal conflicts in the family. The house at Puri is in a dilapidated condition. The Bhubaneswar house has been razed to the ground. Only four persons of this illustrious family continue to be affluent. The financial condition of the others is pitiable. They became impoverished after the abolition of zemindari. Jagannath Dash Choudhury and Brajanath Choudhury, two brothers of the family, lived in Germany and Wales respectively as permanent residents. Jagannath finished his education in Philosophy and died young. Brajanath was a doctor. He was the mayor of his city for some time. His son is also a doctor and is a permanent resident there. Bamadev Choudhury and Jadunath Choudhury, two other members of the family, were deputy magistrates. Gangadhar Choudhury was a member of the Zilla Board. Nilakantha Choudhury was a litterateur and he was active in the Congress Movement. A few young men of the family are working in high positions as engineers. Some of them have renounced the title of Choudhury which was the symbol of zemindari. They prefer to add their educational qualifications to their names. The clan lost its glory with the passage of time.

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# I Go to Cuttack

My summer holidays and *Puja* vacation were both spent at home while I was studying at Chaibasa. Most of my time passed in the company of Madhu Mamu and Jai Bhaina. Madhu Mamu's full name was Madhusudan Mishra. Jai Bhaina was the son of my mother's sister. Madhu Mamu wrote poetry. The three of us used to be on the lookout for Oriya books. We read them together. Madhu Mamu contracted pneumonia and died while I was away at college. That morning I had to go to Puri to bring Kaviraj Purnachandra Rath to the village in a hackney carriage. We returned to Puri by the same hackney to get the medicine prescribed by the Kaviraj. I took the train back to the village. But Madhu Mamu had passed away by the time I reached Sakhigopal Station. My grief was deep. Days passed mourning for him. Jai Bhaina also died before his time, at Bonai. He had a job there and was struck by lightning.

Another close friend in the village was Gangapani. He was the only child of Bhubaneswar Bahinipati, our neighbour. He had his education in the village, retiring later from the Samaj Press. A bimonthly manuscript journal titled 'Palli Prasuna' was published by the students of the Satyabadi School and boys of the same age in the village. Together they formed an association which met every week. Discussions were held on chosen topics and talks arranged. The elderly people of the family approved of my interest in the activities of the association rather than in idle games. Father subscribed to Oriya newspapers and journals like the Utkal Dipika, the Samaj, the Hitaisini, the Utkal Sahitya and the Mukura. I read them regularly. Other boys did not have such privilege. I was, consequently, better informed than the other boys. My general knowledge was wider than theirs. I remember how I happy I was when Pandit Krupasindhu

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Mishra patted me on the back one day after he heard some of my comments. I used to visit Puri during school vacations. Father or his elder brother took me there. We would go in the morning and return in the evening.

After the matriculation examination I spent four entire months in the village, waiting for the results to be announced. Father was away in Chaibasa and I had the run of the house. I visited Satyabadi School frequently. I used to tell my old friends at Satyabadi stories about Chaibasa that filled them with wonder.

Mahatma Gandhi paid a visit to Orissa about this time. People were eager to see him. He was the inspiration behind the non-cooperation movement. The weekly Samaj gave him a lot of coverage. It was on March 26, 1921 that Mahatma Gandhi visited Satyabadi. He had reached Cuttack the day before. He arrived at Sakhigopal by the morning train accompanied by Gopabandhu Babu. We were waiting. He went to the school from the railway station. We too reached there. We had some snacks in the market in the afternoon and reached the station to accompany Gandhiji to Puri. A meeting was scheduled to be held near the Gundicha Temple at Puri that evening. There was such a crowd that Gobandhu Babu had difficulty in boarding the train along with Gandhiji. We travelled somehow or other, without tickets. At Puri the crowd was still greater, dense as a thick forest. It was impossible for so many people to get out through the gates on the station platform. Many climbed over the high railing. Somebody lifted me up on the inside and somebody else took me down on the other side. In the process I lost one of my sandals. To recover it in that crowd was impossible. So I tossed the remaining sandal after the first and went to attend the meeting. It was an experience without precedent for me. I had never attended a general public meeting before. Gandhiji was seated on a chair set upon a platform improvised by making use of a plank bedstead. He was wearing a dhoti and a shirt. A white brimless cap was on his head. Gopabandhu Babu was seated in a corner of the platform. He was dressed similarly in a short-sleeved shirt. I can still see them. Gopabandhu introduced Gandhiji as the Viceroy of the Heart. At that time the public still regarded the Governors and the Viceroy as the finest of men. The crowd went into raptures when Gopabandhu described Gandhiji as not just Viceroy but Viceroy of Heart. Shouts of Hari Bol rent the sky. Then Gandhiji spoke in Hindi. I don't remember what he said. People were more eager to see him than hear him. Hindi was not widely understood those days. It was late in the evening when the meeting came to an end. The experience of seeing Gandhiji and Gopabandhu together,

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and hearing them speak at one of the very first meetings held in Orissa to launch the non-cooperation movement overwhelmed me. The movement had a greater appeal for me than joining college. But my guardians objected and the impulse was short-lived, proving to be as transient as a vow of celibacy taken on a cremation ground.

The results of the matriculation examination were announced towards the end of May. I had passed in the first division, standing second. Congratulations poured in from Satyabadi and the village as well. The family was naturally pleased but a problem was created. What arrangements were to be made for my study in the college? Lokanath Mahapatra, a young man from our village, was studying at Calcutta. He was taking a Master's degree in Oriya. He was the first person from the village to study for an M.A. And he was at home at the time, for the summer holidays. Lokanath was the son of Narahari Choudhury's sister. I was connected by marriage with the Choudhurys of Bhingarpur, and for that, if for no other reason, Lokanath was likely to be a little friendlier with me than others. He also belonged to our clan and was related to me directly. Apart from all these, we were on friendly terms although I was a lot younger than him. He wrote to me from Calcutta. Many a time I sat on the porch of his village home and listened to his stories of Calcutta, and the University. He told me about the Oriya Boarding House in Panchanan Lane, his friend Lokanath Patnaik who studied Law at Calcutta and a rich girl named Sujata to whom he gave private tuition. The letters Lokanath Patnaik wrote to Lokanath Mahapatra interested me greatly and I read them eagerly. His handwriting was large and well-rounded. He distinguished himself in the legal profession later in Puri and composed songs for the radio in addition to his other activities. Lokanath Mahapatra spoke to his uncle on my behalf when he heard of my results at the matriculation examination and I was given a scholarship of thirty rupees a month. I am indebted to him for his generous help at the time. I received a scholarship very soon by the grace of God and I did not need the money.

Lokanath Mahapatra was in Cuttack during my first two years in the college. He resided in the college hostel while he engaged in research on Oriya literature. Later he became the Headmaster of the Bhabanipatna High School. His reputation as a teacher was high at the time of his retirement and he became the private tutor of the royal family of Kalahandi at their Allahabad residence. His sons and sons-in-law were all men of repute. His eldest son Umakanta joined the army. His second son Ramakanta was a member of the I.A.S. The third son Sitakanta was a building contractor of high repute. Chhayakanta, the fourth son, was a

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doctor and the youngest son Srikanta was a businessman. Dibyasingh Tripathy, his son-in-law was a member of the I.A.S. Family feeling was warm and close between us. Lokanath had married my mother's brother's daughter. He was the first person from Orissa to take an M.A. in Oriya. He was a student of Nilakantha Dash during the time that the latter taught there. His skill in literary criticism was extraordinary. It is to be regretted that he never found an opportunity to fully utilise his very exceptional abilities.

Upon publication of the results of matriculation examination, it was decided that I should study I.A. at Ravenshaw College at Cuttack. At that time, it was the only college in Orissa. Gopinath Mishra, my maternal uncle, was living in Cuttack. He was the manager of Madhusudan Das's Utkal Tanneries. Gopinath's uncle, Dibyasingh Mishra, lived with him. He stood in the relation of a grandparent to me. He was a very well-known person and Gopabandhu Dash's teacher. At the time of retirement, he was the Headmaster of the Sambalpur Zilla School.

Dibyasingh Mishra was soft-spoken and gentle in his manner but very upright and of an independent turn of mind. During the non-cooperation movement, Gopabandhu Babu had written an editorial under the title 'Terrible if true' in the Samaj dated August 4, 1923. It was highly critical of the activities of a police officer of the Begunia Police Station. A criminal suit was filed against him as a result, and, it was tried at Khurda in the court of Suresh Chandra Bose, elder brother of Subash Chandra Bose. Preparations were so elaborate everyone was apprehensive that Gopabandhu Babu may be fined or jailed. Dibyasingh Mishra carried a purse of five hundred rupees with him that day to the court. It would be the equivalent of twelve thousand rupees today. If Gopabandhu was fined, he intended to pay the fine and get him released. He was that kind of a person. The court was packed with people waiting to hear the verdict. The magistrate had difficulty making his way to the judge's podium. The verdict was unconditional acquittal. Gopabandhu came down from the accused's box amid shouts of 'Gandhiji ki jai' and 'Congress ki jai'. He went up to his teacher, Dibyasingh Mishra, and greeted him reverently. The crowd was overwhelmed by the sight of the two men, standing side by side in tear-choked silence. Suresh Chandra Bose resigned from government service not long afterwards. Dibyasingh Mishra was deeply committed to education. On hearing of my results in the matriculation examination, he wrote to my father inviting me to stay with him when I went to Cuttack to continue my studies. I was to stay in his house until I was enrolled in the

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College and a place allotted to me in the Boys' Hostel. He was at the railway station when I arrived in Cuttack at ten o'clock in the morning by the passenger train. Gopabandhu Babu was travelling by the same train. After greetings were exchanged, Dibyasingh Mishra told Gopabandhu Babu that I had stood second in the first division at the matriculation examination, introducing me to him with pleasure.

"In the old days," Gopabandhu Babu said, "I would have congratulated you." He ran his hand affectionately over my head.

I noticed that Dibyasingh Mishra paled slightly.

"Now-a-days we're asking students to quit the schools and colleges," Gopabandhu Babu added, smiling. He understood the situation and moved slowly away. Dibyasingh Mishra and I entered the courtyard of the Utkal Tanneries behind the station. He lived in the compound. What Gopabandhu said revived the idea of not studying in the college which had taken root in me at the grounds of the Gundicha temple as I had listened to Gandhiji speak on that fateful day. When I mentioned it to Dibyasingh Mishra, his answer was emphatic and strong.

"Complete your studies first. You can serve the country later," he said.

My uncle was of the same opinion. He went one step farther.

"Your father has sent you to Cuttack to study in college," he said, "Don't forget that."

I submitted to their better judgment. I was not obstinate by nature. But I had a feeling that everything had not gone the way I had expected.

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# Ravenshaw College

Ravenshaw College was moved out of the centre of the town into a new spacious two-storieed building in July 1921. There was a hostel at each end of the college. The physics and chemistry departments were on the first floor. The botany department and the library were on the ground floor. The playground of the college was huge. Living quarters for the superintendent and the assistant superintendent adjoined the college. The wardens of the two hostels were provided with spacious living quarters. The largest building in Cuttack housed Orissa's only college. That was only right and proper.

The day after I arrived I went to the college. It took four days for me to complete the formalities associated with getting a room and enrolling myself in the intermediate class. I was assigned Room No. 1 in the East Hostel. There was no comparison between the Bana Vidyalaya at Satyabadi and the college living arrangements. I shared the room with Gopal Chandra Das. He came from the Puri Zilla School. I had known Gopal from the time I visited Puri on holidays from Chaibasa. We had corresponded and chosen the code name Henna to designate our special relationship. It was the custom for pairs of friends to give distinction to their relationship by adopting code names like Mita or Baula. The superintendent of our hostel was Arta Ballav Mohanty, the Sanskrit teacher. Narayan Mishra, the physics teacher, was the assistant Superintendent. Tripathy Saheb was the warden. Shyama Chandra Tripathy, I.E.S. had studied physics at Cambridge. Narayan Babu left a few months later as the superintendent of the West Hostel and Laxmikanta Choudhury took his place. There was no common mess in the hostel at first. Boys living in a cluster of rooms had a kitchen for

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themselves and each kitchen was managed by a student. Each kitchen had a cook and a manservant. They prepared two meals a day as per the instruction of the student manager. Twenty to twenty five students dined at each kitchen. Afternoon snacks were provided in some of these kitchens, but not in ours. Boarding charges depended on the financial condition of the boys in the cluster. Rice, *dal* and a vegetable curry was the standard fare. Fish was an occasional treat and meat served once a month. The average charge was twelve rupees per month. In some kitchens, charges were as high as seventeen or eighteen rupees. There were two such kitchens. Students from Sambalpur had a separate kitchen on the upper storey where their rooms were. They called it the Sambalpur Mess. Students from Puri had a separate kitchen too. Gopal and I were not part of the Puri Mess. Most of the students from Puri, with the exception of Gopal and I, lived on the upper storey. We two shared our expenses for snacks and other things. *Rasogollas* which cost four *paise* each those days are now a rupee each. Electricity did not come to the hostel for three more years.

The students and teachers were full of enthusiasm. The opening of the College in the spacious new building was stimulating. Mr. Lambert was the Principal. Among the professors were Whitlock Sahib, Tripathy Saheb, Bawa Kartar Singh (Chemistry). Krutibas Samantaray (English), Sharadakanta Ganguly (Mathematics), Kashinath Das (Sanskrit), Barada Kanta Chatterjee (English), Gopal Chandra Ganguly (English), Jadunath Sarkar (History), Suresh Bardhan (Economics) and Mohini Mohan Senapati (Philosophy). The other teachers were lecturers. The Indian Education Service, known as I.E.S., was a cadre like the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.). The Principal, Whitlock Sahib, Tripathy Saheb, Bawa Kartar Singh and Jadunath Sarkar were all I.E.S. men. A few months later Parija Saheb (Pranakrishna Parija) joined them. He graduated in Botany from Cambridge, spent time in research there, and joined the I.E.S. All of these men were exceptionally gifted. Those in the provincial cadres were fine scholars too in their own subjects. Lecturers came next in rank. They were younger and keen about their work. They had close contact with the students. Students were attracted towards the teachers in proportion to their scholarship and affection.

There were no girl students or women teachers in the College. Bawa Kartar Singh was the only member of the staff who took his wife out with him. They were Sikhs. When he took her out, a whisper went among the students that his wife, a young woman, had been once captured by a dacoit. Parija Saheb became the Warden of the West Hostel when he

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arrived. He lived with his wife in the campus. The doors of the hackney were firmly closed when he took her out in a hackney. I remember that the first time the students got a glimpse of her was on the evening Dhable Saheb, the District Judge of Cuttack, brought a telescope and showed the planets and stars in a congregation of students. Dhable Saheb was a Cambridge friend of Parija Saheb, and the son-in-law of the well-known political leader, Gopal Krishna Gokhale. He became a judge of the Patna High Court and retired in that capacity, dying in Poona. The custom of keeping women in *purdah* was abolished a few years later. Parija Saheb's wife, Sundaramani Parija, became a well-known social worker. Both of them were very kind to me. Mrs. Parija put me in her debt by visiting our village to attend the *Upanayan* Ceremony of my eldest son. She was accompanied by her two daughters.

Parija Saheb became a centre of attraction at the college, especially for the students living in the hostel. He gave a series of lantern lectures in the Physics Laboratory in the evenings. Every Sunday morning, he delivered a lecture on England and Cambridge in the Common Room of the East Hostel. Many students received pecuniary as well as other assistance from him. He knew most of the students by name. He was highly esteemed in the scientific community both in India and abroad. He travelled to many places outside Orissa to Calcutta, Bombay, Benaras, Allahabad, Lucknow, etc. as an examiner in Botany at the Universities. He played a leading part in Patna University as a member of the Senate and the Syndicate. Once, on the way to Benaras, he fell ill at Howrah Station. Severe pain in his hips made it difficult for him to stand or even sit up. It so happened that I arrived in Howrah that morning on my way to Patna in connection with my legal work. I found Parija Saheb lying on a bench in the First Class Waiting Room. He told me of his trouble. Dr. Sunil Bose, the brother of Subhas Chandra Bose, was a friend of his. I went to his Elgin Road residence to fetch him. But he was not at home. So I had to consult another doctor and make arrangements for his medical treatment. I massaged his hips with the liniment the doctor prescribed, applied a hot water compress and fed him his medicine. It was 2 P.M. before he began to feel some relief but was overcome with severe pain again when I helped him to the bathroom. I brought hot soup and light toast for him. He ate that. I advised him to go back to Cuttack but he went on to Benaras that evening instead as he felt better. He had brought a pair of enamelled flower vases for me from Benaras that I treasure to this day. I was so deeply attracted by his lifestyle that he became my ideal very early in my academic career. When I was building my house in Chandni Chowk I was

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temporarily short of funds. He had lent me one thousand rupees as soon as I asked him for a loan. I paid him back at the time of his daughter's marriage.

Parija Saheb became the first Vice Chancellor of Utkal University while he was still the principal of Ravenshaw College. I have had the pleasure and satisfaction of having the opportunity of working with him as a member of the senate, syndicate and academic council of the University over a long period of time. His reliance and trust made me careful to perform my duties promptly and to the best of my ability.

Tripathy Saheb was a different kind of man. He was so magnanimous and noble-minded that everyone who came in contact with him was deeply impressed. He was god-fearing and had faith in astrology. His father, Chintamani Tripathy, was well-read in ancient literature. He spent his time in literary discussion with Arta Ballav Mohanty when he came to visit his son. Tripathy Saheb had persuaded the maharaja of Mayurbhanj to donate one lakh rupees for the electrification of the college. The maharaja was his close friend. No one else was on better terms with highly placed european officials than Tripathy Saheb. He helped others through them, remaining behind the scenes himself. He had brought about many improvements in our physics department. He was the first Oriya principal of the college and the first director of public instruction of Orissa, joining the public service commission later. He also joined the Rajasthan public service commission afterwards. He died quite suddenly in Jaipur on August 8, 1951. On the advice of Dr. Balabhadra Prasad, V. Ramanathan, I.C.S., Chintamani Acharya, Bipin Bihari Roy and others, I accompanied his son Nilamani, who was a deputy magistrate at the time, when he went to Jaipur to perform his father's last rites. I was a lawyer then. Harekrushna Mahtab was a central minister at the time and lived in Delhi. We were grateful to him for arranging a motor car to take us from Delhi to Jaipur. Events bring responsibilities to us that are difficult to foresee. The spread of facilities for higher education in Orissa was due to the farsightedness and efforts of Tripathy Saheb as the D.P.I. The role he played in the founding of the Utkal University is unforgettable. A committee had been set up under the chairmanship of Pandit Nilakantha Dash to consider the desirability of establishing a university in Orissa. The report of the committee was published. A law was enacted for the purpose in the assembly when Pandit Godavarish Mishra was the minister of education. But, unless the princely states associated themselves with the proposal, it would not be possible to finance such a large institution with the limited resources at its disposal. Therefore, Tripathy Saheb, at the behest of the

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Maharaja of Paralakhemundi and the chief minister, approached the rajas of Mayurbhanj, Sonepur, Bolangir and Kalahandi, and persuaded them to give their consent in writing. The evening before Tripathy Saheb was to leave for England on a two months' holiday, the Maharaja of Paralakemundi sent for him and requested him to cancel his holiday and shoulder the responsibility for the university.

Apart from Parija Saheb and Tripathy Saheb, the teachers liked most by the students included Gopal Ganguly, Arta Ballav Mohanty, Ratnakar Pati and Suresh Bardhan. Gopal Babu's intense involvement when he taught Shakespeare, Arta Babu's scolding, Suresh Babu's affection for the boys in his class and Ratnakar Babu's conscientious devotion to teaching were subjects of endless discussion among the students. Mahamahopadhyaya Jagannath Mishra was a lecturer in Sanskrit. His English was poor. He was a simple, quiet person and the boys were quiet in his class in order not to upset or embarrass him. Jadunath Sarkar, Sharada Kanta Ganguly and Barada Kanta Chatterjee were aloof. The seriousness of their teaching kept them distant. The students did not dare approach Lambert Sahib and Whitlock Sahib. They were real Sahibs. Two other sahibs joined the staff later. Winston Smith taught history and Octerlony taught English. Smith spoke little and slowly, keeping his head raised. Octerlony was loquacious. He explained English poetry to us volubly, breaking open the seed of its meaning. He became the warden of our hostel when Tripathy Saheb left for Patna as the new D.P.I. there. His liking for me showed both in the class and outside. Another learned professor, a Sindhi, Bhatiya Saheb, joined the staff as a professor of Economics. Professors who had studied abroad differed in their manners from those who had not. The students showed them greater respect. The professors came to the class in coats and trousers. The students wore shirts over dhotis. One student had come from Shillong in Assam. He was the brother-in-law of Jonathan Mohanty, the English professor. He wore trouser and shirt. The majority of the students went bare feet. Only a few students, who lived in the town, came on bicycles. The others came on foot. The professors who lived outside the campus rode to college in hired hackney carriages. Four of them shared a carriage. Hackney carriages were the only vehicles available in the town. Sukanta Rao, who taught physics, came in his own car. How and why, from the outset, I was noticed and distinguished from the others I cannot say.

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# New Friendships

One day I saw Baikuntha (Baikuntha Nath Patnaik) in the first year class in the College. We had been classmates at the Satyabadi school for a while. Our old friendship was renewed. And he knew Annada (Annada Shankar Ray). He had met him in Dhenkanal where he had also studied. He introduced me to Annada. Kalindi (Kalindi Charan Panigrahi) used to stay in the Puri mess of our hostel. Annada knew him. We became acquainted through Annada. Then I met Sarat (Sarat Chandra Mukherjee). I forget in what connection but it was possibly through Annada too. Sarat lived in the town. Baikuntha lived in a small room at the veterinary dispensary at Ranihat not far from the College. The veterinarian was a kinsman of his. Annada lived in the hostel. I don't recall how the five of us became such good friends. We were together in the English class. Girija Shankar Ray was one of our favourite teachers. He taught us a great deal that was not in the syllabus. He introduced us to English and Bengali books that were interesting and relevant to our subject. We used to discuss books and periodicals not included in the curriculum when we five friends met outside the class. That happened nearly every day. Rabindranath Tagore was the brightest star in Bengali literature at that time. And the two journals, one English and one Bengali, The "Modern Review" and the "Prabasi" edited by Ramananda Chatterjee, were actively inaugurating a new age in literature. The renaissance in Bengali literature had started before that. Raja Ram Mohan Ray died on September 27, 1833. But the reforms he had launched went from strength to strength. Keshav Chandra Sen, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and others carried it forward. Sarat Chandra Chatterji's novels added a new dimension to Bengali literature. A

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group of young writers, inspired by Tagore, added to and deepened it with an international outlook. Socially conscious English poets and novelists were exerting an influence throughout the cultured world. It was exciting for us to read English and Bengali literature. New books and journals were not easily available but it was not impossible to get them. Kalindi, Baikuntha and Annada were already writing poetry. I too began to write.

The foremost Oriya journal at that time was the Utkal Sahitya. Biswanath Kar was its wise editor. The Utkal Sahitya was the mouthpiece for all literary writers of repute. We were just students. We did not have the right of entry into the literary field. But when we took our efforts to the door of Biswanath Kar and submitted them to his scrutiny with the greatest trepidation, he welcomed us with unexpected affection and gave us every encouragement. His patronage was like an international passport for us. We were elated. Biswanath Babu was a man of cultivated taste and the leader of the *Brahmo Samaj* in Orissa. His family had taken the lead in many reforms and in women's education in particular. His two daughters, Narmada and Suprava, were graduates. A third daughter, Prativa, had just passed the intermediate examination. Narmada was married to a munsif in Bengal. The other two girls were still unmarried. They were teachers in the Girls' High School. The family's style of living was aristocratic and very Bengali. Ramananda Chatterji and Gyananjan Neogi were his close friends. He accepted us into the family. When our writing appeared in the pages of the utkal sahitya and, at the same time in Mukur as well, we were so gratified we decided to launch a magazine of our own, a manuscript magazine. I named it the Abakash, a word composed of the initials of the four friends. A for Annada, B for Baikuntha, K for Kalindi and S for Sarat. My initials did not fit into the name and so it was changed to *Sakti Sadhana* within a month or two. We published writing in Oriya, English and Bengali. We friends had become The Nonesense Club, a designation we probably took from Cowper. Cowper's book was in our curriculum. Harischandra Badal and Harihar Mishra were two of our classmates. Harish lived in the East Hostel and Harihar in the West. Both became our friends. Harihar had known Sarat at the Victoria School. All five of us concerned ourselves with thoughts of reforms during the first two years of our college, when we were studying for the intermediate examination. Our time was spent in making plans for the future and heated discussion of the alternatives open to us.

Sarala Devi came into prominence as a pioneer of women's emancipation around that time. She was our age, married. She belonged to a landowning family and was married into a landowning family. She was

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not highly educated. She was the daughter of Basudev Kanungo, the adopted daughter of Balmukunda Kanungo, the magistrate. She was married to Bhagirathi Mohapatra of Chatara. She had never been to school but she had educated herself and become a good writer. She was an avid reader and well-read in Oriya and Bengali literature. I do not know where she found the courage and inspiration to break the shackles of the purdah and engage in social work. She defied family and social criticism to come forward to join the congress movement. We became acquainted with her in connection with literature. She was living in the house of Balmukunda Kanungo at the time. The house had a main building with a thatched cottage attached to it. One or other of the five friends used to visit her there and talk with her. I have had the pleasure of working with her many times in various connections after leaving college. Our friendship grew out of similar literary tastes.

Annada and Sarat passed the intermediate examination in the first division. The other three of us passed in the third. Annada and Sarat went to Patna to study for the B.A. there. We decided to write a novel together. Annada and Kalindi drafted the story. Kalindi became the editor, taking upon himself the task of collecting and integrating the various contributions of the other authors. A similar novel had already appeared in Bengali. Biswanath Kar gave us his support and generously agreed to publish the book serially in the *Utkal Sahitya*. The friends of the Nonesense Club were the chief contributors. But others like Sarala Devi, Suprava Kar, Baishnab Charan Das, Muralidhar Mohanty also contributed to the book. The originality and novelty of the book had created a sensation in Oriya literature at the time.

We could not have done it without the encouragement of Biswanath Kar. The project had run concurrently with our studies for the B.A. degree. Kalindi, Baikuntha and I were studying B.A. at Ravenshaw. There was no break in our friendship, writing and discussions. Baikuntha, at that time, took some of my poems and got them published in Mukur under a pseudonym, Banaphul.

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# Voters' List

The municipal elections in Cuttack were imminent. A list of voters was being compiled. The students residing in the hostels were eligible to be voters but their names had not been included. The same thing had happened during the previous election. Nobody bothered about it at first when I brought up the subject. I drew up a petition, writing it out by hand, and took it to the Chairman of the municipality, Sri Ramshankar Ray. He was a *vakil,* novelist and a playwright. He was seated on a mat spread on the floor in front of a small desk in his Choudhury Bazar house. His clients and subordinates were also sitting on similar mats spread about the room. He asked me the reason for my coming to him after I had been kept waiting for a long time. He may have assumed I had come in connection with some law suit. I handed the petition to him, stating the reason for my coming. He put on his spectacles and went through it. Then he burst out laughing, handing the petition to his junior partner. He asked me to seat myself beside him and questioned me, asking my name, what I studied, etc. He was a man of slight physique with a grey beard, a quiet figure.

"This is something new," he said, looking at his junior partner, "How can students living in the hostels have votes? Are they permanent residents?"

"A voter need only be a resident," I replied, "It is not necessary to be a permanent resident."

"Who told you that?" he asked, taking out the Municipal Act and reading it.

"Nobody," I answered, "We want to be voters."

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It was the time of the congress movement and he apprehended that we might have been instigated by the congress in order to ruin the election. He spread a lawyer's trap before me.

"Do you have the right to file a petition on behalf of the students?" he asked.

I had no answer, saying only, "All the boys have put their signatures on this."

"Where is your power of attorney?" he asked. He returned the petition and gave his attention to other work.

I had no idea what he meant by power of attorney. But I was more determined than ever to have my way. I went to Bichitrananda Das, another *vakil*, at his house at Dagarpada. He was preparing himself for a bath, rubbing himself with oil. He listened to my account of what had happened sympathetically, asked me to wait while he finished his bath and spoke kindly to me when he came out. Then he explained to me what a power of attorney was. He wrote it all out for me himself on stamp paper, told me to get the boys to sign it. Then he bade me go. Unknown to myself I had entered the precincts of the legal profession. I had gone to Bichitrananda Das when I needed a lawyer because I knew him slightly and I did not know any other *vakil*. Once, coming to college from my village, I had got into the same compartment as Bichitrananda Das at Sakhigopal station. Das was travelling from Puri to Cuttack in inter class. Students usually travel third class. He may have been interested to find me in inter class. He asked me a lot of questions in a friendly way. He used to visit Parija Saheb at the warden's residence. I spoke to him occasionally.

Two days later, I presented myself to Ramshankar Ray for a second time. The original petition and the power of attorney were with me. He examined both the documents minutely.

"Who will you vote for if you are allowed to vote?" he asked.

"We'll think about it when we see who's standing for the election," I answered.

"Very well. Your names will be on the voters' list. But you shouldn't get mixed up in things like this. Put your mind on your studies," he said softly.

The pleasure I felt was so great I was impatient to get back to the other boys. I did not want his advice. Arta Babu and others had scoffed at our idea at first. They congratulated us now. They wanted to add the names of

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the teachers to the voters' list but it was too late. The deadline for the revision of the list had passed. When the election took place, the students cast their votes while the teachers looked on. I became famous in the college.

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# The Common Room

There were two large rooms on the ground floor of the two hostels. One was meant for the common room and the other for the common mess. The rooms were not used. The boys used to have their meals on the verandah as there were a number of kitchens. I felt the common room should be put to some use. Tripathy Saheb encouraged me when I spoke to him about it. Arta Babu was noncommital. Laxmikanta Babu said, "Go ahead. Let us see." The students were apathetic. A meeting was called for 9 o'clock one Sunday morning. The notice was issued over Tripathy Saheb's signature. He wrote 'approved' on it. It was circulated among the boys through the manservant Buddhiya. Arta Babu and Laxmikanta Babu both came. There were about fifty students, less than half the total. The obstacles in the way of utilising the common room were mooted first. The chief difficulty was lack of funds. I suggested that each student should contribute one rupee and each of the kitchens should pay ten rupees. The proposal was carried. Arta Babu became the president and Laxmikanta Babu the vice president. I was made the secretary. It took me more than twenty days to collect the money from the kitchens and the students. I showed the money to the principal and got a contribution from him too. Tripathy Saheb donated a hundred rupees. We were able to raise Rs. 1,600/- in all. We bought a carrom board, a harmonium as also newspapers, periodicals and magazines in English, Oriya and Bengali. The common room was formally declared open one Sunday morning by Tripathy Saheb. Once a project is started, enthusiasm and supporters are never lacking. Most people are apathetic until then. I got the credit of making the common room functional. And the responsibility of keeping it going was also mine. The common room was open every evening and all

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day on Sundays. Until I left college after passing my B.A. examination, I had to make sure that things went smoothly. Two Sundays every month, meetings were held for the students. A literary quarterly was brought out in manuscript. It was named '*Jagaran*'. Kalindi was its first editor. Kalindi was easygoing. Contributions to the magazine had to be collected and brought to him. The boarders responded to the discussion groups and took interest in the magazine. Every Saturday there was a musical performance. Laxmikanta Babu took special interest in it. Carrom, cards and dice were favoured by a small group of the boarders. I have attended the annual function of this hostel as the chief guest several times in later years. I have enjoyed sharing memories of the early days of the common room and bestowed a monetary token on Buddhiya.

The college office is located these days in the room that was supposed to be the students' common room in our time. The room was furnished with tables and chairs. But it was rarely used. Pranab Chandra Choudhury, a Bengali boy, was my senior by two years. He organised a Debating Society. The debates were held in the common room. Whitlock Sahib was the president. The speakers were students. Pranab and a classmate of his, Sunil Palit, were among them. I too stood up to speak like an inspired idiot. Another friend of Pranab's, Hari Charan Mukherjee, spoke highly of my ability as a speaker once when I took part in the debate. I started taking part in debates regularly thereafter. Pranab and I became good friends in the process. His home was in Tulsipur. His father, Khirod Chandra Roy Choudhury, was an influential person. He used to edit the Star of Utkal, an English weekly. Pranab lived with his widowed mother, two sisters and a brother. His brother Runu was in our class. He had two elder brothers who studied at Calcutta. I have been to their house in Tulsipur many times. There was laughter when I used the formal pronoun 'Apana' to address Pranab's younger sister, Bela.

"At last somebody has been found who speaks to you respectfully," Pranab and his mother exclaimed.

Bela later married Hari Charan Mukherjee. Pranab became a deputy magistrate after passing M.A. and was posted to Bihar. He had an extraordinary ability to write up anything with an eye to publicity. He rewrote the District Gazette for Bihar very ably. He also worked with the Gandhi Foundation in Delhi for some time. He visited my village twice while studying at the college. We are still on extremely cordial terms. He and I spent a lot of time together in order to popularize the common room and put it on a sound financial footing, ensuring that it had a good supply

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of newspapers, journals, weeklies, monthlies, publicity booklets and other reading materials.

The Debating Society met every Saturday. The students became more interested than ever when Kunja, the snack vendor, put up his portable stand besides the common room door.

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# Societies and Meetings

Meetings of various kinds were held in the Cuttack Town Hall at the time. Meetings concerned with literature were held in *Sri Ram Chandra Bhavan* of the *Utkal Sahitya Samaj*. Larger gatherings connected with the congress and the non-cooperation movement were held on the sands beside the Kathjodi River. All these meetings interested me. I used to walk to the meeting place although it was about three miles away from the hostel. I did not have the means to engage a hackney carriage. The walk did not tire me. My enthusiasm sustained me and I went even though none of my friends came with me. Gradually, I began to participate in the meetings. This gave me the opportunity to come to know the ordinary public as well as the leaders. I was often called upon to say something on behalf of the students. Laxmi Narayan Sahoo, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Satyanarayan Sengupta, Bichitrananda Das, B. Das, Brajasundar Das, Bhikari Charan Patnaik, Shashi Bhusan Ray, Chintamani Acharya, Rajkrishna Bose, Nabakrushna Choudhury, Jadumani Mangaraj, Govinda Chandra Mishra, Reverend Brajananda Das, Khan Bahadur Ahmed Bux and others often asked me to speak and sometimes sent word to me in advance. Satyanarayan Babu, Bichitrananda Babu, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Naba Choudhury, Jadumani Mangaraj and Govinda Mishra supported the Congress. The others were on the side of the Government. Laxmi Narayan Sahoo was a moderate, middle-of-the-way man. Not everybody went to the meetings he arranged although he himself was free to go to meetings of all kinds. He was the only leader among the elders who mixed openly and without any reservation with the students. He often came to see me in the hostel. At times, he stayed all day, coming in the morning and departing only in the evening. He would wait in my

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room while I went to class. The circumstances in which we met for the first time were something special. When I was spending my vacation in my village after appearing at the matriculation examination, I wrote an article in English and sent it for publication to The Star of Utkal. He was the editor of the magazine at that time. He published my humble contribution. When classes started again in July, he came to the hostel and looked for me. There was a cordial relation between us from that day till the end of his life.

A students' meeting took place in Puri around this time. Sir Dev Prasad Sarvadhikari happened to be in Puri. Everybody wanted him to be the president of the meeting. I was chosen to propose his name. Sarvadhikari's forefathers had migrated to Bengal from Jajpur. The meeting was being held in the hall of the Puri Zilla School. The hall reverberated with hand clappings when I said that Sarvadhikari was an Oriya and that he was proud of the fact. Sarat Mukherjee, my friend, seconded my proposal and gave a speech. Later he commended me, saying, "Hari, when you spoke English so fluently, Gopinath Mishra was delighted. So were the others." True or not, compliments of that kind are pleasing. The next students' meeting took place in Cuttack. By that time Sarat was in Patna. So I had to take the sole responsibility.

1923–24 was my third year in college. I was studying English (Hons.), Philosophy and Economics. When the time came for the examination, it was discovered that I was the only student to take Philosophy and Economics. It was an unusual combination and was abolished the following year.

A reception committee had to be constituted first to hold the *Chhatra Sammilani* at Ravenshaw College. Funds were required to cover the expenses of the meeting. I went to Parija Saheb. He agreed to become the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Bhikari Charan Patnaik had founded an institution named Poor Cottage Industries in which destitute women and young people were taught various handicrafts and given employment. Waste paper, clay, palm fronds, scraps of cloth and dolls were put to good use. He also farmed silk worms and the thread he obtained from them was woven into tussar silk. Saris, dhotis, coats and tunics were made from it. Bhikari Babu was rewarded with the title of Rai Saheb as this kind of activity was much favoured in those days. His house was close to the Town Hall and part of it was taken up by his workshop. A few people called him Silk Worm Rai Saheb behind his back. He became the Vice Chairman of the Reception Committee. Laxmi Narayan

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Sahoo became the secretary. Jadumani Mangaraj and I became joint secretaries. A few others were included as members. The meetings of the Reception Committee were held at Bhikari Babu's house. Parija Saheb was present at all of them. He drove to Bhikari Babu's house by hackney and I often accompanied him. I obtained permission to open the Reception Committee Office in a room of the hostel. Octerlony was the warden and granted permission readily, without consulting the principal. It was unanimously decided that Godavarish Babu would be invited to preside over the meeting. Preparations were complete four days before the scheduled date of the meeting. The college hall was the chosen place. At this juncture, the Government cast its disapproving eyes on us. The president, Godavarish Mishra, was a Congress leader. The secretary, Jadumani Mangaraj, was a Congressman. And Laxmi Narayan Sahoo often opposed government policies. The Government decided to prevent the meeting from being held. We were extremely upset. Student delegates from outside Orissa and various parts of the province itself had begun to arrive at Cuttack. Godavarish Babu had informed us he would reach Cuttack the day before the meeting. He was to be Parija Saheb's guest and stay with him in his house. Mr. Bell was the district magistrate of Cuttack. He was British and so was the Commissioner. The police superintendent was also British. To them it appeared most deplorable that a meeting of students attended by congress men should be held in the college hall and that the committee should have its office in the hostel. Principal Lambert and Warden Octerlony were asked to revoke permission for the meeting. Words were exchanged between the Englishmen. The Principal and others communicated their unwillingness to withdraw their permission. They maintained that to do so without any valid reason at that juncture would inflame the students. Parija Saheb also protested that his own prestige would suffer. He suggested a way out of the impasse. He asked me to persuade Laxmi Narayan Babu and Jadumani Mangaraj to resign from the post of secretary and joint secretary. I set out to try. Laxmi Narayan Babu agreed at once. He wrote a letter of resignation and accompanied me to Jadumani Mangaraj. Jadumani was tempestuous by nature. He had left college in response to Gandhiji's call for non-cooperation. He lived in *Swaraj Ashram* and was well-known for his fiery eloquence. He did not agree to resign. Laxmi Narayan Babu and I, with the others who accompanied us, argued with Jadumani till twelve o'clock that night. Ultimately, he too wrote a letter of resignation. I took the two letters to Parija Saheb early the next day. I was the only remaining secretary. The Commissioner was appeased. Only Godavarish Mishra had to be

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approached. Parija Saheb took me with him to Mr. Bell. I acquainted him with the preparations that had been made. I tried to convince him that the students' meeting was in no way connected with Congress politics. Parija Saheb assured him that Godavarish Mishra would not speak against the Government at the meeting. The magistrate instructed the police not to obstruct the meeting.

The Government's attempt to prevent the meeting affected the students. They were agitated on the opening day. Parija Saheb's welcoming speech as the president of the Reception Committee was solemn and heated. His face flushed. How independent he was became apparent that day. The other professors were somewhat embarrassed. He referred to me several times in the course of his speech. The scene is indelibly etched in my memory. In January 1977, Parija Saheb was felicitated by the Alumni Association and the college commemoration committee. I presided over the meeting and referred to the part he had played in the holding of the chhatra sammilani in 1924 in my speech. I saw Parija Saheb's eyes fill with tears. What Godavarish Babu said that day moved everybody deeply. Without uttering a single word against the Government, he made such witty insinuations that even the C.I.D. men put away their pencils with a smile. At the conclusion of his speech, I proposed that, as a protest against the Government's efforts to interfere with the meeting without any justification, all other activities should be suspended indefinitely. Discussions went on openly for a long time in the college hall in the presence of government officials and the resolution was carried. I was branded as an anti-government agitator. I felt as frustrated at the *Chhatra Sammilani* in Cuttack as I had felt at Chaibasa, at the students' meeting in Chakradharpur in 1920. There is a degree of success even in failure. That was my consolation.

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# TEACHING

After my B.A. Examination in 1925, I went back to the village. There I was told that Acharya Harihar Das wanted to see me. This was my first visit home since the death of my aunt, Mani Pishi. She had passed away while I was at Cuttack. Home had lost its strongest attraction. Madhu Mamu had also passed away. Jai Bhaina was no more. Lokanath Mohapatra lived at his place of work. I felt bereft in every way. Mother was in the village, of course. Father had been transferred from Chaibasa to join as the head pandit at the Nimapara Training School. I had to stay at home until the results of the examination were published. There was no knowing what had to be done then. I was busy in something or the other during the college days apart from studying. I brought some books from Cuttack, which I planned to spend my time reading. I went to see the Acharya the day after I arrived.

The Bana Vidyalaya of Satyabadi had become a National School in 1921, as a first step in the congress movement in Orissa. In 1923, it had been made a college, but a college only in name. The students were being prepared to appear at the matriculation examination by 1925.

The Acharya said, "Your examinations are over. Come and teach in the school. You went up for higher education from this school. Come back to it." I could not but accept although I had never thought about it. Krupasindhu Mishra was the headmaster at the time. The Acharya took me to him.

"Krupasindhu," he said in a tone of finality, "Arrange for Hari to join the school today." I was informed that all the necessary decisions about my joining the school had already been taken. In obedience to the order, I

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went to a class immediately, in some trepidation. The subject to be taught was English. The whole village knew that I had become a teacher at the Satyabadi school before I reached home. All that remained to be known was the amount of salary I was to receive. Neither the Acharya nor Krupasindhu Babu had said anything about a salary and it was not possible for me to broach the subject. They were half-starved themselves. They had sent for me because they knew they could count on me. It was a magnanimous gesture on their part and I was honoured. I had not joined the school in the hope of receiving a salary. Neither had they called me to formally appoint me as a teacher in the school. My appointment met the needs of both the parties, mine and the school's. I was overjoyed. It was an opportunity to repay in part the debt I owed the school for what I had learned there as a boy.

Classes were held in the morning. I rose at dawn and walked the three miles to the school, coming home at noon. I did as a teacher what I had done formerly as a student. The dirt road of the village was somewhat better than what it used to be but nobody in the village owned a cycle and neither did I. I believed that I was working for the country by working in the school. It brought me satisfaction and I took interest in it.

I was just back from the college and wore freshly laundered clothes to my classes. I wore shoes too and shaved twice a week. Students were quick to notice such things. Three members of the school's staff were named Harihar. One was the *Acharya.* The second was the mathematics teacher and the third was Harihar the Fop, i.e. me. I learned later that this honorary designation had been conferred on me by Bhagabati Panigrahy, Udayanath Sarangi, and others. They studied at the school. Sadashiv Mishra was also their classmate. I taught them English. Krupasindhu Babu spoke English with a drawl while I spoke fast. I've heard these boys found it most entertaining to mock us both for our way of speaking. Bhagabati was a good mimic and fond of fun. He retained this characteristic all his life.

The results of the B.A. examination were announced in June. I passed with honours, in the second class. My father was worried although everybody else was pleased. I wanted to join the servants of India society. Laxmi Narayan Sahoo was a member of the society and he informed me there would be no difficulty about my joining it. There was another thought in my heart, the thought of continuing to teach at Satyabadi, according to the ideals for which it had been founded. Behind both these ambitions was apprehension. I was afraid I would not have the financial

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resources to study for a Master's degree. When my father told me to apply for admission to the M.A. class, my apprehension vanished. English at the M.A. level was taught at Cuttack. I went to Cuttack to make the necessary arrangements. My teaching at Satyabadi came to an end. I took leave of the Acharya and the others. But another opportunity to teach came my way. I became a part-time lecturer in Cuttack Law College in 1940. I taught there for five years during which time I practiced as a lawyer too.

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# The Deer of Illusion

Passing the test before the final B.A. examination did not take much effort. Two months between the test and the final examination were available for study. But the responsibility for the administration of the hostel had devolved upon me because I was now regarded as one of the seniormost students. I decided to go to the college building early in the morning quietly, enter a classroom and study for at least three hours undisturbed. Things went smoothly until an incident, I did not realise the importance of at the time, took place. When I look back now I realize how easily hope is awakened in a young heart. My immediate future was involved. I pursued it like the proverbial deer of illusion, the *maya harin*.

The central figure in the incident to which I am referring was the Professor of Economics at Ravenshaw College, Bhathija Saheb. He was an I.E.S. officer, a handsome man with an impressive personality. The students thought highly of him. I was sitting in a small classroom for tutorials on the upper storey of the college. It was around 8 o'clock in the morning. I had seated myself on the teacher's chair and spread my books on the teacher's desk instead of sitting on one of the students benches. Bhathija Saheb saw me as he passed down the corridor. He entered the room and asked me why I was at the college at the odd hour and why I was studying in this room. I rose to my feet and we chatted for a few minutes standing there. When he heard I was studying for English Honours with Economics and Philosophy, he grew thoughtful and remarked suddenly, "Try for a State Scholarship after the examinations. It'll be a help to you." I did not realize the importance of what he was saying at the time. I was preoccupied with my preparations for the coming examinations and absent-minded. The examinations were hanging over my head. I had to

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deal with them first of all. What would come after could be attended to later.

The examinations took place. The results were published. I passed but got a second class. That year, 1925, I was the only student to take philosophy and economics at the B.A. examination of the Patna University. Two of my professors and several of my friends took exceptional interest in my results for that reason. I reached the college a few days after the publication of the results, coming straight from the village. The college was closed for the summer vacation at the time. I had come to find out how to apply for admission to the M.A. course. My family was not affluent. There was a scholarship of Rs. 50/- a month at Ravenshaw College to study M.A. at that time. The scholarship was intended for the student who secured the maximum marks in the B.A. Examination. For boys in limited circumstances, it was an unprecedented opportunity. Rs. 50/- was enough those days to cover one's college expenses. To the boys of today that must appear impossible.

I reached Cuttack at noon, arriving from my village by the morning train. By the time I met Tripathy Saheb it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. S.C. Tripathy, I.E.S., was the Professor of Physics. He was the Warden of the East Hostel. He was a most affectionate person, soft-spoken, high-minded and cordial in manner. He called me as soon as he caught sight of me in the distance.

"Harihar," he said, "The mark sheets have come. You're likely to get the Post-graduate Scholarship. Go to the office and talk to Jagannath Babu."

I felt as though the moon had dropped into my hands, the hands of a small, unworthy dwarf.

Mr. Tripathy was in charge of the college during the summer vacation. He looked after the papers as one of his main duties. The Principal, Mr. Lambert, was away from Cuttack. Mr. Tripathy had therefore seen the mark sheets from the university. He was fond of me and had noticed that I had secured the highest marks among those who had passed B.A. from the college. I hurried to the college office at once. With me went the boy who had got the highest marks in the B.Sc. Examination.

Jagannath Mishra was a clerk but he behaved as though he was somebody superior to the college principal. He always wore dark glasses, sported a French-style goatee, and spoke with self-important emphasis, particularly with the students. He kept himself aloof and had to be approached with caution. Tripathy Saheb had only told us to check with

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the office. I wanted to know my total marks. So I stood at the office window and waited for Jagannath Babu to give me his favourable attention. He understood but pretended he didn't. He was sitting facing the window. My friend, the Science student, took offence and left. But it was in my interest to get the information I wanted. What could I do but wait? I was hesitant about entering the office. What if Jagannath Babu was annoyed? There was another clerk in the office. After some time he came up to the window, with a casual show of politeness. He acknowledged the new graduate outside. After I explained the reason of my coming, he passed on the information to Jagannath Babu. Jagannath Babu turned his face slightly towards the poor petitioner waiting for his pity. He heard why I was sitting on the verandah and what I had come to hear from him. It ought to have gratified his vanity. Perhaps an ingratiating smile would have won me a little sympathy but his dark glasses and formidable beard presented an insuperable barricade.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"The mark sheets have come. May I know what my marks are?"

"Why?" again a question.

"For the Post-graduate Scholarship," I blurted out innocently.

He did not produce the mark sheet; much less show it to me. And what he said upset me considerably. Still, as a last resort, I said that Mr. Tripathy had told me my marks would secure the Scholarship. I had hoped that the mention of Mr. Tripathy's name would have an effect on Jagannath Babu and he would soften a little. Mr. Tripathy was the Principal-in-charge at that moment. The effect it produced was the opposite of what I had hoped. Jagannath Babu responded very strongly, if not quite in a roar.

"What say does Mr. Tripathy have? I say you haven't got the Post-Graduate Scholarship."

How could I ask to see the mark sheet after that? I came away, my head hanging low, wounded by the insult and the harsh stinging way it had been inflicted. I would have to go home without hope. There must have been some mistake about the mark sheet. Mr. Tripathy would not have said what he did without good reason. Why did Jagannath Babu deny it so virulently? My confusion would have been cleared up by showing me the mark sheet. But Jagannath Babu put a full stop to any such possibility at the outset. Does a dash of cold water make a fire burn brightly? Butter does. But no drop of butter was poured into my hope. I wonder now, as I

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have often wondered in the past, why I did not insist on being shown the mark sheet that day. College students of today would be amused that a graduate did not stand up to a mere clerk and came away humiliated. Was not a boy like that pitiable? It was largely true.

But colleges today are different from what they were in my time. We entered college in 1921, when Mahatma Gandhi launched the non-cooperation movement. The students were passionately patriotic although not all of them could respond to the Mahatma's call and quit college. Those who did leave college and join the congress movement were, in our eyes and general estimation, boys of proper spirit, worthy of praise and deserving of fame. Outside college, we did not quit established contact with them, participating in public meetings and the many activities they launched. They were the leaders. But we were not sensitive about our college education. We knew that the future leadership of the country was certain to fall into the hands of educated and trained men. And, in that eventuality, we would rank higher than those who were giving up everything now to participate in the struggle for freedom. Our college years were only a step on the climb up to the high level of competence the country would require in the future. The vision of a shining future helped us steady ourselves when a foot slipped or we reeled under the impact of the non-cooperation movement. The idea that the country would be served by the wearing of *khadi* and by so doing we were taking part in Mahatma Gandhi's Movements prevailed for a time. We wore khadi. But I was more attracted by the conduct of professors like Parija Saheb and Tripathy Saheb, men who had studied abroad and held high positions in the field of education. The wearing of khadi seemed of secondary importance. We saw men who were frontline leaders of the Congress in those days coming to Parija Saheb and Tripathy Saheb in secret, taking help from them that was not only pecuniary. We saw how highly they were esteemed. Their higher qualifications, higher positions and higher incomes were duly respected. Parija Saheb and Tripathy Saheb were second only to Mr. Lambert and Mr. Whitlock. They were the only Oriya professors who had studied abroad and were members of I.E.S. They were always spoken of as Parija Saheb and Tripathy Saheb. All the other members of the faculty were addressed as Babus. This was the case with Narayan Babu (Narayan Mishra who taught Physics), Arta Babu (Arta Ballav Mohanty who taught Sanskrit), Kashi Babu (Kashinath Das, who taught Sanskrit), Krutibas Babu (Krutibas Samantaray who taught English), etc. The other three I.E.S. men who were not Oriyas were Baba Kartar Singh (Chemistry), H.R. Bhathija (Economics) and Jadunath

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Sarkar (History). Of these Bhathija and Baba Kartar Singh joined the I.E.S. after studying in England. So they were addressed as Sahebs. Jadunath Sarkar was a famous historian. He became a member of the I.E.S. after he had established a reputation in the academic world by writing on the Mughal period of Indian History, focusing particularly on the reign of Aurangzeb. He was not addressed as Saheb however because he had not been to England and did not have a degree from a university outside India. His extraordinary ability and great learning were generally acknowledged however. Outside the college, the non-cooperation movement was raging. Gopabandhu Dash, Nilakantha Dash, Godavarish Mishra, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Acharya Harihar Dash, Bhagirathi Mohapatra, and others like them, lit the fires of a blazing patriotic fervour. Inside the college, Parija Saheb and Tripathy Saheb were held in high esteem. They were admired by all sections of the society. I and other young men like me swayed between these two poles of thought. Our own judgment had not yet become set at the time. It was natural that I should be partial to the ideals of Satyabadi School as I had spent several formative years there. Satyabadi was also the hub of the awakening patriotism. But I lacked the strength to resist the temptation of intellectual pursuits. The reasons for this state of affairs were chiefly two. When we entered the Ravenshaw College in 1921, it had been moved away from the town to new buildings on the open grounds at Chauliaganj, near the Cuttack Railway Station. The hostel was also located in the same compound. We were completely cut off from the town and its influence, almost three miles away from it. The town was limited to Buxi Bazar, Telenga Bazar and Chandni Chowk. There was no transport beyond these places, no buses, no rickshaws. The sole vehicle available was the hackney carriage and it was too expensive for the students. It cost nearly half a rupee to travel one way, in or out of the town. Is the reader laughing? A rupee was a lot of money those days. There were only a handful of students who could afford such extravaganza. Cycles were rare. The few boys who had cycles and rode them to college were considered to be wealthy. For all practical purposes, students were isolated when the college was moved to its new building. Urban life ceased to affect the life of the students as it had previously. The students, who in the first excitement of the non-cooperation movement, had abandoned their studies to engage in political and social activity, were all old students of the college. The college and the hostel had been close to the *Swaraj Ashram* on the banks of the Kathjodi River. The students were the first to hear of any new stir in the political life of the country. Congress meetings were held on the sandy banks of the

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Kathjodi and the audience was largely composed of the students. Heated discussions of what took place at the meetings were conducted afterwards in the hostel. All that came to an end when the college was moved away from the town. All connection with the life of the town may not have been broken, but it became attenuated. After 1921 no college student left his studies to join the non-cooperation movement as Harekrushna Mahtab, Nabakrushna Choudhury, Jadumani Mangaraj and Rajkrushna Bose had done. The countless people who contributed their might to the freedom movement were people not connected with the college students.

The second reason was the fascination of literature and the hold its practice came to have over us. College brought us the opportunity to read and study the best writers of India and the world, men like Tagore, Tolstoy and Romain Rolland. We went through an intellectual revolution. Our ideals took on colour and richness. Little by little we came to realize that our motherland was best served by the literature created through revolutionary thinking. At the outset of their college careers, Annada Shankar Ray, Sarat Chandra Mukherjee, Baikunthanath Patnaik, Kalindi Charan Panigrahi and their friends formed a group of young readers, writers and thinkers of a high order, more interested in ideology than in politics. In their efforts to cultivate the imagination and acquire an ability to think creatively, they ignored distinctions between east and west, foreign or indigenous, old and new. I was a member of their circle and my thinking was naturally influenced by theirs. I started writing a little myself. Some of my work was published in the literary journals of the day. I was taken into the company of Biswanath Kar, the famous editor of the Utkal Sahitya, Brajasundar Das, the editor of Mukur and Laxmi Narayan Sahoo of the Servants of India Society. They were older men, all established leaders of the intellectual life. They did not approve of Mahatma Gandhi's methods and sought, through cooperation, to win independence for the country. The more I associated myself with them, the weaker grew my attraction towards the loud Congress war drums, unknown to me.

That a mind like mine, so torn by diffidence and hesitation, should lack the strength required to face any challenging conflict was only natural. A single assertive statement by a clerk like Jagannath Babu was enough to discourage me. I did not have the courage to insist upon being shown my mark sheet. What Tripathy Saheb had said had stirred a hope in my heart. But Jagannath Babu axed my hope. Years later, when I was a member of the Syndicate and Senate of the Utkal University, I came in close contact with Jagannath Babu on a number of occasions. I was associated with the

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work of the University and took an active part in its functioning. Jagannath Babu worked as the manager of the university office at the time. I never noticed any hesitation or diffidence or lack of respect in his manner towards me. On the contrary, he always cooperated with me and I have heard him speak highly of me to others behind my back. I asked myself at times whether he was the same man who, in 1925, on a certain afternoon, had dashed the hopes of a young graduate with a few harshly spoken words. It was not true that my marks were not the highest. Let me speak plainly. I do not nurse a sense of hurt nor do I have any contempt for Jagannath Babu. On the contrary, I am convinced that it was my destiny that intervened.

When I was told I would not get the postgraduate scholarship, I gave up all hope of studying for an M.A. and went home to my village. I had been teaching at the Satyabadi School ever since the Acharya had sent for me after I passed B.A. Again and again I remembered what Bhathija Saheb had said about a State Scholarship. I might have been able to do something about it if I had been to study for the M.A. But, when that was not possible, why should the question arise at all? I went on with my teaching, consoling myself as best as I could. Every day I walked the three miles from the village to Satyabadi School and back again. It was the end of June when my father-in-law put at my disposal the funds I required to study for the M.A. He did it of his own accord. His lawyer at Cuttack, Sarat Chandra Pal, had come to know that I had been deprived of the postgraduate scholarship unfairly, by a low intrigue. I was informed that if I wanted to study for the M.A., he would provide the Rs. 50/- a month the scholarship would have brought me, for the entire two years. What he really wanted was for me take a job. In that case, his daughter would be more comfortable in our straitened family circumstances. What worried me more was what Bhathija Saheb had said. I had a wife, it was true, but she spent the major part of the year at her parents'. I had no way of knowing her difficulties. So I made up my mind to accept the financial assistance of my father-in-law, go to Patna and study M.A. as well as Law. I was disillusioned with Ravenshaw College. My friends, Sarat Chandra and Annada Shankar, were already in Patna. I would have remained in Ravenshaw if I had been given the Postgraduate Scholarship. That had not happened. There was no reason for me to stay at Cuttack. Wasn't it better to go to Patna? I had heard that students studying M.A. in Patna got State Scholarships. To enable me to study in Patna, I had to have a certificate from the Principal of Ravenshaw College.

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I went to ask Mr. Lambert for a certificate when the college opened after the summer holidays.

"Why are you going to Patna instead of studying here in Cuttack?" he asked. He was assuming that, as I had secured Honours in English at the B.A., I would take English at the M.A. also. An M.A. English class had been recently started at Ravenshaw. There was no M.A. in any other subject there. If the number of students fell below expectations, it would be difficult to convince the higher authorities and University officials to open M.A. course in other subjects at Ravenshaw. The Principal was naturally anxious that all the English students should go on to study M.A. at Ravenshaw. I pondered what I could say in the circumstances that would not offend the Principal.

"I'm going to take Economics for my M.A.," I said without mentioning Law.

Mr. Lambert pulled a long face and looked at me obliquely. He was somewhat surprised.

"It would have been perhaps better for you to take English here," he said.

The full implication of what he was saying escaped me. And how was I to know he was referring to the postgraduate scholarship? I had stopped thinking about it when Jagannath Babu said so bluntly that I would not get it. The break in my thoughts had been complete. Delayed understanding brings a lot of trouble in its train. If I had not given up so easily and sought more information from the Principal, I would have been spared a lot of trouble and would not have put myself in the false position to say that I would study economics. The principal was an Englishman, a man of grave disposition. In all the four years I had spent in the college, I had never seen him smile. He spoke little and kept his eyes lowered. Why should he go out of his way to speak to me openly about the scholarship? Englishmen in India all kept their distance. They belonged to the ruling class. It was as difficult to approach a foreigner, particularly an Englishman in administration, as it was easy to turn to a countryman, even an official, and find sympathy. And why should an Englishman want to share our troubles or become involved in our problems? Mr. Lambert said no more, falling silent and leaving me to suffer my fate. He gave me the certificate.

Things did not end there. About a month after I had enrolled myself in Patna College and stayed in the hostel, I received a postcard. The letter

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had been redirected to Patna from my village. Mr. Lambert had signed the letter.

"You have received the Postgraduate Scholarship. When can you come to join the M.A. Class? Inform me at once."

I was amazed. The hurt which was lurking in my heart was suddenly gone. What Tripathy Saheb had said was true. Jagannath Babu had deceived me. I realized at last what Mr. Lambert had meant when he said I ought to enrol for the M.A. English classes at Cuttack. Why had Jagannath Babu deceived me? He had no reason to be inimical to me, did he? We had never exchanged words while I was in College. He was a close friend of Arta Ballav Mohanty, our hostel superintendent. Arta Ballav Mohanty was a well-known researcher in ancient Oriya literature. Jagannath Babu often came to see him, particularly on Sunday afternoons. They played dice on the verandah of our hostel's upper storey. Professor Krutibas Samantaray joined them. So did Prof. Bipin Bihari Roy. So I saw Jagannath Babu sometimes outside the College. He used to ask me about my welfare. It was not that I did not enjoy a certain degree of esteem generally. People who mattered in the College were aware of me. I was not very good at studies. But I was not a troublemaker. Students who hoped to do well in the future and had a chance of becoming professors in their turn enjoyed the respect of the college staff. The staff did not behave rudely to them or attend to their duties negligently in regard to their needs, especially during the final years of their study. The more I thought about these things, the more puzzled I became. Why had Jagannath Babu made so much trouble for me from the start? The Principal's letter soothed my hurt to some extent and I replied humbly, saying that I was not in affluent circumstances and, being dependent on outside help, had joined the M.A. class in Patna with difficulty. Could I avail of the scholarship at Patna? I was prepared to return to Cuttack and resume my studies at Ravenshaw if it was not possible. I put the letter in the mail and waited for the reply. My friends in Patna came to know about me being given the postgraduate scholarship. A monthly stipend of Rs. 50/- was not just a substantial sum of money those days. It brought prestige with it, conferring a certain status.

A week passed. A month passed. No answer was forthcoming. The Principal of Patna College, Prof. Jackson, could have helped me if I had not been lacking in resourcefulness. Prof. Jackson could have arranged for me to have the scholarship at Patna. Mr. Lambert would not have said no to him. I learned of this later from Octerlony Sahib, the English professor.

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By that time the case was far gone. Hindsight always brings humiliation in its wake. The Puja vacation arrived when I had been expecting a reply by every mail for a month or more. On my way home from Patna I stopped to find out what had happened.

I went to Narayan Mishra, the physics professor, told him my story and requested his help. He was the superintendent of the West Hostel. He was consistently good to the students and concerned with their problems. He was ungrudging in his help. Every student who went to him received assistance. He was the assistant superintendent of the East Hostel when I arrived at the college for the first time and was accomodated there. He occupied a room on the ground floor, next to ours. He was sympathetic and affectionate by nature and I knew him well. So I felt no hesitation in seeking his help. He promised to enquire at the office and let me know by evening. I spent the whole day waiting. He told me a strange story in the evening.

My marks were the highest among the students who sat for the B.A. examination from Ravenshaw College that year. Natabar Sahu, my classmate, had stood second. Harihar Mishra was third. Jagannath Babu, for some unknown reason, was partial to Natabar Sahu. Natabar had decided to look for a job after his B.A. He was not interested in higher study and he did not have the means to pursue it either. Jagannath Babu wanted him to study for his M.A. and he wanted him to have the scholarship. But a student who stood second could not get the scholarship unless the student who stood first was eliminated in one way or another. Jagannath Babu felt there was no particular urgency for me about getting the Scholarship and I would be able to manage without it and my further study would not be in any way handicapped. How he came by such an erroneous notion I do not know. Later I came to know he was not the only one. Others also had the same idea about my financial position. Only the other day a close friend said that when he saw me for the first time at college, he had assumed that I came from a wealthy family. Jagannath Babu may have formed a similar unfounded impression. Be that as it may, it was only to help Natabar that he had eliminated me at the outset, not from any dislike of me or unfounded antagonism. The letter announcing that I had won the Scholarship had been dispatched to me from the college in the routine manner. It could not be withheld or altered without the Principal's consent. It duly reached me by registered post. By that time I had already replied to the letter saying that I had joined M.A. class in English at Patna. My reply was placed before the principal with a note

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from the office. The note stated that, as I had gone to Patna at my own expense to study for the M.A. there inspite of the fact that M.A. in English was taught at Cuttack, the scholarship was not indispensable to me. This being so, it was desirable that the scholarship go to the student who had stood second. Mr. Lambert approved the note. Perhaps he had not forgotten my request for a certificate. He may have thought that I had gone to Patna in spite of his suggestion that I remain in Ravenshaw and felt I had, in so doing, shown disregard. My statement in my letter about my being dependent on outside help was overlooked.

Natabar Sahu ultimately decided against continuing his studies. He looked for a job instead and took up the study of Law. He started his career as a sub-deputy magistrate and completed it as a settlement officer in the I.A.S. His friendship with me dated from our college days and remained unbroken to the end. It was a warm relationship that four years of living in the same hostel and attending the same classes had nurtured. It lasted fifty years, terminated only by his death.

Harihar Mishra came after Natabar. He was my friend too. He was the one who got the scholarship, neither the one who had won it nor the one to whom it was given by devious means. I, the first, was left dangling. We two Harihars, Harihar Mahapatra and Harihar Mishra, were and remained close friends. We were '*mita*' to each other in the Indian fashion. He played no part in the attempt to deprive me of the Scholarship. For me it was the pursuit of an illusion, the Golden Deer of *Maya*. It came easily to him.

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# Patna College

I went to Patna when I did not get the postgraduate scholarship. I enrolled myself in M.A. English class there. I wanted to study economics. But Octerlony Sahib had been transferred to Patna college by that time and he insisted that I take English. Armor Sahib and Niranjan Niyogi were the other professors in English. Dil Sahib, another Britisher, joined later. I did not get a room in the hostel at first. Gopal Chandra Das, Padarabinda Mohanty and I stayed in a rented house near the college. Gopal studied Law. Padarabinda opted for physics. A room was allotted in my favour in the Mohammedan Hostel of Patna College in a few days and I moved there. Gopal and Padarabinda continued to stay in the rented house. Patna College had two hostels, Minto Hindu Hostel and Minto Mohammedan Hostel. The hostels were not far from each other. The Biharis were a conservative lot and casteism was rampant. Hindu students could stay in the Mohammedan Hostel. But Muslim students were not permitted to stay in the Hindu Hostel. There were five Hindus including me in the Mohammedan Hostel. All of us belonged to Orissa. Annada had been staying there since taking admission in the B.A. Class. Krupasindhu Mishra too stayed there. Pranakrishna Nanda and Harish Chandra Badal enrolled themselves in M.Sc. and moved to the hostel with me. They studied Chemistry. Annada had enrolled himself in the M.A. Class. But he was there to prepare for the I.C.S. Examination. Sarat Mukherjee stayed in the Hindu Hostel from his B.A. days. He got first class honours in Economics in B.A. examination and had enrolled himself in the M.A. class. He got the job of a deputy magistrate that year and discontinued his studies. We lived in the Mohammedan Hostel, but had our food in the mess of the Hindu Hostel. Armor Sahib was our

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superintendent. A lecturer in Persian was the assistant superintendent. He was a Muslim. Bimal Ray, who became the police superintendent of Cuttack later, joined us in a few days.

Jackson Sahib was the Principal of the college. Horn Sahib and Coldwell Sahib, professors in economics and chemistry respectively, lived near the hostels in the college compound. Patna College was located on the banks of the Ganges. The palace of the Maharaja of Darbhanga was near the college. There was a Kali temple there. The students thronged the temple during the examinations. The gymnasium and the playground were in the college compound. Jadunath Sarkar had moved to Patna from Cuttack. He lived in a rented house near the college. Pranab Roy Choudhury stayed with him and studied M.A. in history. He left Patna when he was selected as a deputy magistrate.

I had also enrolled myself in the Law College. Law classes were held in the mornings and evenings. I was in the evening batch. Alam Sahib was the principal of the Law College. He had taught at the Cuttack Law College earlier. Barrister Sharif Sahib was the Vice Principal. He did not practice and taught full time. All the others were part-time lecturers. They practiced in the High Court. B.P. Sinha was among them who later became a judge of the High Court and retired as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India. Eminent advocates and barristers like B.P. Jamuar, Shibeswar Dayal, Nawal Kishore Prasad, Bhagabati Sinha and others taught at the Law College. Hence, there was an indirect connection between the High Court and the law classes. I used to go to the High Court often. I derived a lot of pleasure in watching the judges and prominent barristers like Sir Ali Imam, Hasan Imam, Sir Sultan, Manuk Sahib among others. There were many Britishers among the judges. I was overwhelmed by their stateliness, sincerity and conduct. I had never imagined that I would be a judge some day in the same High Court. I tried to follow in the footsteps of these judges when I became a judge myself. I was the only student of the Law College who visited the High Court regularly to observe the proceedings. There were two Oriya advocates in the High Court, Gajendra Pratap Das, and his junior, Pitambar Mishra. Law practitioners were segregated into two classes, barristers and vakils. One became a pleader when he passed B.L. Such people did not have the right to practice in the High Court. They had to pass an examination conducted by the High Court in order to become a vakil. Only then they were permitted to practice in the High Court and the lower courts. A barrister was free to practice in all the courts. Vakils were known as

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advocates. After Independence, all law practitioners came to be known as advocates according to the Advocates Act. Two of my classmates, Kamla Sahay and Kameswar Dayal, were appointed as judges while I was a judge of the Patna High Court. Kamla practiced initially in the High Court, became a district judge and later became a judge in the High Court. Both Kamla and Kameswar passed away soon after their retirement. My studies in the Law College were over in two years. But I appeared at the Law Examination in 1931, four years after my enrolment. How I went on a merry-go-round for those four years is another story which I shall recount later.

Teaching was of a high order in Patna College. The debating society was also very active. I took part in debates regularly. The topic for discussion one day was 'Unification of Oriya-speaking Areas'. I spoke in support of the motion while Kalikinkar Mitra of Ranchi spoke against it. Discussions continued for a long time after which the motion was put to vote. I got more votes in my favour. The matter had been reported in the local newspapers. Kali Babu joined as a deputy magistrate later. He became revenue secretary and used to stay in front of my house when I became a judge. His wife used to visit my wife. Kali Babu too came to see me at times. He reminisced about the debates in Patna College.

Krupanath Mishra, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Mithilesh Sinha, Bilagrami and Makub Ali were my close friends at the college. Bhabani is a well-known journalist in English. He has also excelled in the field of writing short stories and novels. He lives at Nagpur. He is an active member of the PEN (Playwrights, Editors and Novelists) Organisation. His father had retired as a district judge. He had built a house on the sea shore at Puri and lived there. Bhabani too came often to Puri. The house has been sold since. Mithilesh joined the I.P. and retired as the Inspector General of Police of Bihar. He lives at Danapur in Patna. His father, A.K. Sinha, was the first Inspector General of Police of India. Mithilesh's son, Lt. General S.K. Sinha, has adorned the second highest position in the Defense Department. Krupanath was a professor of English. He joined the Department of Education, Government of Bihar and has retired. Bilagrami practiced law. Makub Ali was a minister in the Government of Bihar. Bilagrami shared sweets from home with us during the month of *Ramzan*. Baldeo Singh of Gaya was another close friend. He had passed B.A. from Benaras Hindu University and studied Law at Patna. He had the gift of the gab. He became a barrister later and practiced law at Gaya. I lost touch with my friends at Patna after I left the place. The same thing

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had happened at Chaibasa too. Contacts were renewed with Mithilesh and Krupanath again after I became a judge at Patna.

There were a few Oriya students in the Patna Medical College. Medical colleges were set up in Orissa much later after it became a separate province. Although the medical college was located near our college, there was no scope to get acquainted with the students there. The situation is the same now in Cuttack too. Many Oriyas served as officers and employees in the Bihar-Orissa secretariat. They lived in Gardanibagh which was about three miles away from the college. They had no contact with the Oriya students in Patna. One of them, Jagat Ballav Das, belonged to Gopal's village and was distantly related to him. Gopal and I went to his house at times. They kept cows. Jagat Babu and his wife loved to treat us with milk and cheese. After retirement, Jagat Babu served for a few years as the *dewan* of the King of Puri. He was a very affectionate person. He was childless; consequently, we received a major part of the couple's love and affection.

The Bihar-Orissa legislative council had its sessions in Patna. I watched the proceedings often from the visitors' gallery. Harekrushna Mahtab, Godavarish Mishra, Jagannath Das of Kantapari and Srikrushna Mahapatra, the retired superintendent of police were members of the Council from Orissa among others. Dwarikanath and Devaki Nandan Singh from Bihar took part in the discussions often. I was charmed by the lectures of Devaki Nandan Singh. A number of zemindars including the Zemindar of Dumerang were members too. They were addressed as rajas and maharajas. Often, their lectures were drafted by students studying in M.A. classes. Krupanath Mishra, my friend, had introduced me to the raja of Dumerang. It had been decided that I would write his lectures. I got twenty five rupees for writing one lecture. Mostly, the lectures were written during the budget sessions. I had written about ten lectures for the Raja of Dumerang. Krupanath too wrote lectures for another member. Khwaja Mohammed Noor was the Chairman of the council and he conducted the sessions brilliantly.

The Khudabux library was near the Medical College. It boasted of a large number of invaluable Arabic and Persian manuscripts. There were a large number of rare books in the library. I used to go there on holidays. Radhika Sinha library was another library there. Barrister Sachidananda Sinha had set up the library in a house adjacent to his residence in memory of his departed wife. The library had a large number of books. Newspapers and magazines came regularly to the library. Bhabani and I went there.

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Sachidananda Sinha was a council member, member of the central assembly and executive councillor of Bihar. Above all, he had achieved fame as the first chairman of the constituent assembly for the drafting of the constitution after independence. He was also the vice chancellor of Patna University. He had a lot of influence in Bihar. Students sought help from him when they were in trouble. He was a famous speaker and columnist.

The Y.M.C.A. Hall was located near our college. All kinds of meetings were held there. Prof. Niranjan Niyogi presided over some of the meetings. He was a very good speaker. He had a melifluous voice much appreciated by the audience. I tried to attend most of the meetings. I went there after the Law classes were over. That attracted me as much as the High Court and the Council. I was impressed by the analyses of the subject matters as well as the mode of presentations.

Biswanath Kar and Brajasundar Das were members of the text book committee of Patna. They visited Patna once a year. Both of them stayed in the house of Radhakanta Ghosh. He was the district judge of Patna. He belonged to Cuttack. He had two brothers: Nalinikanta was a deputy magistrate in Orissa and Rebatikanta was an advocate at Cuttack. From Biswanath Kar's letters, I learnt for the first time that Radhakanta-Ghosh lived in Patna. He used to write me letters in my college address. I used to write a serial during my college days titled 'Banaphul' in Utkal Sahitya. I got acquainted with Radhakanta Babu when I went to meet Biswanath Babu. I was also introduced to Brajasundar Babu, the editor of 'Mukur' at the same place. I made friendship with Lata Didi, the widowed daughter of Radhakanta Babu. She loved to read and discuss Bengali literature. Annada was friendlier with her than me. Radhakanta Babu spoke Bengali at home. But he talked to us in Oriya. But he had no contact with the Oriya students in Patna.

The convocations of the University were being held in the governor's bungalow those days. T.S. McPherson, a judge of the High Court, was our vice chancellor when our B.A. degrees were distributed in the convocation held in 1925. Annada, Sarat, Pranakrushna Nanda, Padarabinda Mohanty, Gopal and I had a group photograph taken after receiving our degrees. That always reminds me of the days gone by. Pranakrushna and Padarabinda have passed away. Padarabinda contacted tuberculosis while studying M.Sc. and passed away in two years. He belonged to Padmapur village in Salepur. His father was a station master in the railways. Padarabinda was a sincere student who had no foes. He was affectionate

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and helped people in need. He had brought a violet, woollen coat supplied by the railways to his father. I had worn the coat several times to protect myself from the terrible cold of Patna. Padarabinda was a very good friend of Gopal and me. We had been to his village during his illness. He had become thin. But the familiar smile was always there on his lips. I had been extremely saddened at his death. I often think about him and wonder why such nice people had to die young.

Sarat had been transferred to Hazaribagh in 1927 as a deputy magistrate. I received a letter from him saying that I had to attend his marriage on May 24. Already I knew that he had decided to marry Santa Sinha, an M.A. student, of Kathagada Sahi of Cuttack. He was a Brahmin. Santa was a Kayastha, a lower caste. Sarat was sure that his father and uncles would not agree to the marriage. He had therefore made arrangements to go for a registered marriage under the Special Marriage Act at Hazaribagh. Hazaribagh town was about eight miles away from the railway station. Arrangements were, therefore, made for the marriage near the railway station. Kishorimohan Juardar, the Headmaster of the Victoria High School, had escorted Santa to Hazaribagh. The registration was completed within a short time in a small room in the presence of about six to seven people. I signed the register as a witness to this inter-caste marriage. That was perhaps the first inter-caste marriage of Orissa. I had to be the witness at two other inter-caste marriages in 1932 and 1936. One was the marriage of Krupasindhu Mishra, I.C.S. with Bindu, daughter of Dewan Bhabagrahi Biswal. The other was between Gopal Chatterjee and Bela Dutta. A few years later, I was also a witness to the marriage between Gangadhar Rath and Nirupama Mohanty. Gangadhar was a Brahmin while Nirupama was kayastha. Gangadhar later became an eminent advocate and served as the Advocate General of Orissa. Nirupama has excelled as a doctor and social worker.

An all-India debate cmpetition was held in Benaras Hindu University in December 1926. Krupanath and I were selected to represent Patna University. We were out of our wits when we reached Benaras. Krupanath had no problem in finding friends there. I felt like a fish out of water. Students had come from Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Aligarh, Allahabad, etc. The students had been accomodated in the hostels in the campus. The competition was being conducted on the occasion of the convocation. Pandit Madanmohan Malaviya presided over the convocation. The convocation address was delivered by Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose. Jagadish's wife, Abala Bose, was present. Her devotion to her husband

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could be seen plainly. Two to three thousand people had gathered there. More than one judge of Allahabad High Court was present. The maharaja of Benaras was there too. I had never witnessed such a huge gathering. I was in a trance. The debate competition was held on the second day. There were several distinguished people on the dais including Malaviyaji. Justice Gokar Nath Mishra from Allahabad, Professor Sheshadri, an English Professor of Benaras Hindu University and another High Court Judge (I cannot recall his name) were the judges for the competition. The subject matter of the debate was declared there: 'Modern civilization is conducive to human happiness'. Lots were drawn to decide who would speak in favour and who against. I had to speak against the motion. I was terribly scared to speak. I was constantly reminded of my inadequacy looking at the large congregation and such illustrious people on the dais. Other competitors seemed much better equipped than me. They were much better dressed than me. I would have liked to slip away from the place if an opportunity had presented itself. My name was announced even when I was going through such mental turmoil. I cannot recall what I said. The bell went off to signal that my time was up and I got down from the dais, drenched in sweat on a cold day. The competition and the discussion among the judges continued for three more hours. The results were finally announced. A student from the Benaras Hindu University was first. I was second. A student from Aligarh was third. We were called to the dais. An image of Goddess Saraswati in gold was presented to the student who had stood first. I received a gold medal and the third student got a silver medal. All these were presented by Malaviyaji himself. I felt gratified.

A Hindi debate competition among non-Hindi speaking students was scheduled in the afternoon. A few students suggested that I should participate and I agreed. I was as nervous there as I was in the morning. Malaviyaji was the president and his two associates were there as judges. When I stood first and received the gold medal, Malaviyaji asked me, "To which state do you belong?" There was a great deal of applause when I said that I came from Orissa. Malaviyaji invited me to visit him at his residence. I went there in the evening and was gratified to talk to him. Another competition took place that evening at the dining. It related to the number of *chapatis* one could eat. I was a mute spectator there. The student who stood first in the competition and won a Ganesh idol made of silver had been able to eat twenty seven chapatis. He was tall and thin and studied M.A. in Allahabad. His name was Nakul Singh. He was perhaps a Rajput.

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The principal and the superintendent of the hostel congratulated me when I returned to Patna. Prof. Niranjan Niyogi presided over a function to felicitate me.

Another incident occurred at this time where a minor role played by me had paid dividends. The Congress boycotted the Simon Commission when it visited India. They were rejected wherever they went. They were mortified. They had also expected the same kind of reception at Patna. In spite of the boycott by the congress, the Raja Saheb of Kanika (who was an executive councillor from Orissa) and other non-Congress Oriya leaders decided to welcome the Commission in order to press for the unification of all Oriya-speaking areas. I volunteered to do my bit for the purpose. The congress had a lot of influence in Patna. We knew that they would do everything to thwart our efforts. About five of us paid one hundred rupees to the station master of patna railway station for sweets and put up posters welcoming the commission on the platform beside the Hardinge Park. The members of the commission got down from the train early in the morning and were extremely happy to see the welcome posters. They picked up a few posters that proclaimed 'Orissa Welcomes Simon Commission'. Attlee set up a sub-committee later and recommended for the constitution of a separate state. Whether anyone agrees or not, our gesture had a minor role in the fulfilment of the long-standing demand.

When the academic session came to an end, I took permission from the authorities to appear at the M.A. Examination at Cuttack. I stayed in the house of Jagannath, a mechanic in the power house at Ravenshaw College, until the examination to facilitate my preparations. I had milk and bread most days. Sometime, Jagannath was kind enough to give me rice and curry prepared by him. There were two rooms in his quarter. He had left the smaller room for me. Jagannath was a simple man. I am grateful to him.

Annada left for England on August 8, 1927 for his I.C.S. training. He had secured the first position in the examination and had been nominated for the I.C.S. He was facing an even greater test in life at that time. He came to me in the morning of his departure and handed over the subject matter of his problem sealed inside two empty biscuit tins. He was to leave Cuttack late in the evening by the Madras Mail. His father was among his relations who had come to see him off at the railway station. I was amazed to see his composure that evening. He was deeply religious. He was extremely saddened that his son was leaving for England. But he made a valiant effort in wearing a smile on his face all throughout. Annada always

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wanted to join the I.C.S. I had heard a great deal about his future plans when we were at the hostel in Patna. He was happy that he had achieved what he had always wanted. He did not seem to be disturbed in the least that he was going away from his family members. The train left and I returned with a heavy heart. Annada's desire to turn into a *pucca* sahib faded after he arrived in England. I had written him a letter in English soon after he left to which he had replied in Bengali. He had written that he would resign from his job after serving for three to four years. He had also expressed his desire to publish a magazine on his return. He had advised me to go into law practice and publish a newspaper. He had written the letter in Bengali to retain his individuality and steer clear of the influence of English. But it did not continue for long. All his letters after that till date have been in English.

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# Lack of Foresight

I have never been able to forget a sad event that occurred during my stay in Patna. The non-fulfilment of an ambition of life has agonized me all my days. Parija Saheb returned from England and joined Ravenshaw College. I was strongly attracted to him from the very first day. He was my ideal. Both Parija Saheb and Tripathy Saheb had gone to England for higher studies on State Scholarship. The ambition to follow their example and study abroad myself took hold of me from the very first glimpse I had of Parija Saheb. I did not have the means. I thought an opportunity might come after the B.A. Examination. The official notice announcing the State Scholarship was published after I arrived at Patna College. I applied. My interview was taken by a committee of eight. Khan Bahadur Khwaja Mohammed, President of the Council, was the Chairman. The other members included Mr. Fox, the D.P.I., Principal Jackson of Patna College, Prof. Lambert of Ravenshaw College, Council Member Dwarika Prasad, Laxmidhar Mohanty, and Coldwell Sahib, the Chemistry Professor of Patna College. There was another person too but I have forgotten his name. The applicants were Ghanashyam Das, an M.A. student of History at Patna College, Harihar Mishra, an M.A. student of English at Ravenshaw College, Krupanath Mishra from Patna College, I and others. After the interview it became known that I had stood first but Ghanashyam Das had been selected as it had been decided in advance to award the state scholarship for history that year. It was confidentially recorded that two scholarships would be awarded in English the following year. My name was recommended for one. I was pleased. Some days later I happened to be at the gate of the Law College with a few friends when the D.P.I., Mr. Fox, drove past. He stopped the car when he saw me and called me with a raised finger.

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"Why are you loitering here? You will get the State Scholarship next year. You should now try to learn French." He said with some annoyance.

I was silent. I did not disclose the fact that I was studying Law. He would have been dissatisfied with me. But I stopped worrying about my fate in the year ahead after what he had said. The other students who were standing with me at the gate spread the word far and wide.

A month or so later, Tripathy Saheb and Parija Saheb came to Patna to attend the meeting of the Senate of Patna University. They stayed at the house of Ashu Babu, the Physics Professor of Patna College, as his guests. They sent word to me to meet them. I went there on Sunday morning. When I arrived, Parija Saheb was having a shave and Tripathy Saheb was reading the newspaper. They both told me that the Principal of Ravenshaw College wanted me to shift to Cuttack and study there. The Principal had said that Ghanashyam Das had won the state scholarship from Patna and if I too won it from Patna the conclusion would be drawn that Patna was the place to go to get it. To get a state scholarship elsewhere would be difficult. Good students would be reluctant to study for their M.A. degrees at Cuttack. I informed them of what Mr. Fox had said a few days ago. Parija Saheb said he had been told by Mr. Lambert that it had been decided to award the scholarship to me the coming year. It was for that reason he wanted me to get it as a student of Cuttack College. I recalled that Principal Lambert had asked me to study M.A. at Cuttack when I went to him to get the certificate I needed to enter Patna. I had replied that I intended to study economics. There was no provision for M.A. in economics at Cuttack. If Parija Saheb or Tripathy Saheb would have put a little pressure on me, I would have certainly complied with the suggestion. But the matter was spoken of so casually that I gave it little importance at the time. I have always lacked foresight. I felt there was nothing to worry about when the committee had taken the decision and the D.P.I. had spoken to me. Why should I go to Cuttack for no good reason? Patna is a much bigger place and since I had come to Patna I felt I should continue my studies there.

When the award was advertised the following year, I duly submitted my application. Krupanath and Harihar Mishra were also among the applicants. All members of the interview board of the previous year were present. At the end of the interview, Principal Lambert insisted that the award be made to a student of Cuttack College. Harihar Mishra was the only candidate from Cuttack. The question of the decision taken the previous year was raised. Principal Lambert replied by saying that there

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were no two opinions about the superiority of Harihar Mahapatra. But if he was given the Scholarship, the conclusion would be drawn that Patna was a better place to try for the Scholarship than Cuttack. Good students would not stay in Cuttack. The other members bowed to his insistence and logic. Harihar Mishra from Cuttack and Krupanath Mishra from Patna got the Scholarship. I could not get the scholarship as it was to be awarded to one Bihari and one Oriya. I was struck off the list for no fault of mine. I reaped the reward for my lack of foresight. I lost the state scholarship just as I had lost the postgraduate scholarship. The disappointment was to grieve me all my days. I have always recalled this incident on every visit to London in my later years and when I purchased a house there. It has troubled me even more when I went to see Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Harihar Mishra and Krupanath Mishra were both my friends. With Harihar Mishra my relationship was special. We were '*mita*' to each other. He was warmly welcomed in my household and affectionately accorded a place in the family. I was deeply grieved when he died of cancer in 1982, only a short time ago. Krupanath and Harihar both studied in the University of London, financed by their scholarships. But unfortunately both failed their examinations. Later I heard that Harihar Mishra's family had put a lot of pressure on principal Lambert to help him get the Scholarship. Parija Saheb told me long after that Mr. Lambert was remorseful over what had happened.

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# TUTORING

I wondered what I would do after the M.A. Examinations were over. A friend from my Satyabadi School days, Rama Chandra Mishra, lived in Cuttack's Pension Lane. He was a clerk in the Settlement Office. He lived alone with his mother. He was strongly attached to me. He invited me to stay with him. On March 20, 1926, I accepted the post of tutor to the two nephews of Upendra Chandra Mishra, the lawyer. A salary of Rs. 25/- was agreed upon. Every day I went to his residence in Kaligali from Pension Lane in Buxi Bazar. Five months later, I became a tutor at the palace of the Raja of Sukinda. I had to live in the palace and teach the grandson of the Raja for Rs. 50/- a month. My food was supplied by the palace. I moved into the palace on August 13, 1928. The palace was on the bank of the Kathjodi River, near the Sunshine Field. Raja's grandson lived there and was looked after by a large staff of attendants. The prince was studying in a lower class of the Collegiate School.

During my stay there I observed the custom of fasting on the eleventh day of the moon, Ekadasi. I dined on light refreshments in the evening after fasting during the day. I had been to the lawyers' bar at Cuttack one afternoon on an Ekadasi. I met Bichitrananda Das there. He asked me to sit down beside him and tell him what I was doing or planned to do. I was thirsty, so thirsty I drank water from the canteen there. I returned to the palace and had refreshments in the evening. By noon the next day I was passing loose stool. By evening it became clear that I had cholera. Everyone was worried. Gopabandhu Choudhury and Nabakrushna Choudhury came to see me. Naba Choudhury had been my friend from my Ravenshaw College days. He had left college to join the Non-Cooperation Movement. Later he studied at Santiniketan for a while. He

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was an extremely thoughtful and intelligent leader, an intellectual. He married while I was studying for my M.A. His friendship with Malati Sen at Santiniketan developed into love. I took part in the wedding reception that had been held four days after the marriage in his two-storied house on the bank of the Kathjodi River. Malati Choudhury made her debut as an Oriya bride, her head bowed and face veiled, her ankles adorned in silver ornament. A new Kayastha Karan wife. Nabakrushna Chaudhury's father, Gokulananda Choudhury, was an eminent lawyer. He had died. Gopabandhu Choudhury had passed his M.A. and become a deputy magistrate. He had resigned from government service and joined the congress. I had come to know him when I was in college, seeing him at various public meetings. Naba Choudhury's mother was orthodox. His marriage had been performed as far as possible according to strict conservative rites. Both the brothers, Gopabandhu and Naba, hurried to my side when they heard I had cholera. They sent for Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya who had joined the Congress and arranged for my treatment. Atal Babu was a terrorist when studying medicine in Calcutta and was put under surveillance. He was a man of noble and magnanimous disposition, always ready to help anybody in distress. On his suggestion the assistant surgeon was called in. He came and gave me an injection. I was not fully conscious. I began to feel somewhat better on the second day. Naba brought me barley water prepared at his home. Gopabandhu came to see me again and again, anxiously enquiring how I was. I came to know later that Minudi (Malati Choudhury) prepared the barley water. She told me later that Naba's frequent visits had alarmed her. She was afraid he might get the cholera too. That was only natural. She was a new wife. My father came when he was informed of my plight. At that time Nilamani Senapati was the collector of Cuttack. He arrived at the palace quite unexpectedly at eleven o'clock one morning and asked about my treatment. Interviews were scheduled at the Orissa divisional commissioner's Office for the selection of deputy magistrates the day after his visit. The collector of Puri, Dayanidhi Das, had put my name at the top of the list of applicants. My voice was very weak when I told Senapati Saheb that I would not be able to be present at the interview. He asked me not to worry. I was told later that on Senapati Saheb's insistence my name was retained at the top of the list and forwarded to Patna for final selection. Senapati Saheb arrived at Cuttack in 1921 after his I.C.S. training in England, a couple of months after the return of Parija Saheb from England. We were in the first year college class. He came to the college the very day he arrived, in Tripathy Saheb's company. We were consumed with curiosity, watching him as he

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walked down the verandah. He was wearing a blazer and presented a wonderful figure. A reception was held that evening at the Town Hall to felicitate him. Biswanath Kar presided. Senapati Saheb arrived there dressed in a dhoti, blazer and tie. I had attended the meeting. Parija Saheb had also been felicitated the same way on his return from England. Biswanath Babu had presided. Parija Saheb wore a dhoti and a kurta. My acquaintance with Senapati dates from this time. He came to know me when I was lying unconscious, stricken with cholera.

When I recovered I had to undergo an operation as the injection I had been given turned septic. I still bear the scar on my right arm.

I was called for an interview as a candidate for the post of income tax inspector while I was residing in the Sukinda Palace. The interview was scheduled to be held at Ranchi. I sent a telegram to my friend Pranab Roy Choudhury who was a deputy magistrate in Ranchi at that time, asking him to put me up. In reply I received a telegram on the eve of my departure informing me of his inability to accommodate me. I took a rickshaw to his house when I reached Ranchi. His displeasure at the sight of me was offensive. I was hurt. That our friendship should have changed to such an extent because one of us was in government service was unthinkable. He had married Taru Dutta, the only daughter of K.B. Dutta of Patna, a barrister. She was the only girl to study for an M.A. in Patna College. They had become friendly in Patna, married and settled in Ranchi. Being the daughter of a barrister and the wife of a deputy magistrate, she considered herself superior. So it was not surprising that she should consider an ordinary young Oriya boy who had come to attend an interview for the post of a low rank very inferior. She must have persuaded her husband to send the telegram apprehending loss of prestige if I stayed with them. But as I had turned up at their doorstep some arrangement had to be made for me and I was put in their storeroom. Another candidate for the same post was staying with them too. His name was Maithili Mukherjee. His room was spacious and comfortable. Mrs. Roy Choudhury scarcely spoke to me during my stay although Pranab Babu had not been discourteous. Thirty years later I became a Judge of the Patna High Court and on the very first evening I received a welcoming visit from Mr. and Mrs. Roy Choudhury. To know a Judge was apparently a matter of prestige. Pranab Babu came to see me frequently as long as I was in Patna and I was often invited to his house for dinner. Our previous cordiality was restored. It has stood the test of time. He had given me a few issues of the Zilla Gazette he had compiled.

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There was only one post for an income tax inspector and many candidates. I was selected. Maithili Babu later became a Munsif. I was practicing as a lawyer in Cuttack when he was posted there. He was very popular. Every one liked him for his pious and unassuming nature. He retired as a sub-judge and settled at Puri.

My salary as an Income Tax Inspector was Rs. 150/- a month. I rented a house in the Ganga Mandir neighbourhood and started living there with my wife and son. A son was born to us at Bhingarpur the day before I was stricken with cholera. We named him Pravat Kumar. Madhusudan Mohanty was the income tax officer at that time. His father, Raghunath Mohanty, was a well-known mukhtiar. He used to come to the office in his father's hackney. The job of an Income Tax Inspector was highly regarded. There was one Income Tax Officer and one Income Tax Inspector in Orissa at the time. I had to go to different places in Puri, Cuttack and Balasore on tour. The salary of an Income Tax Officer was a hundred rupees more than that of a Deputy Magistrate. An Inspector of Income Tax received Rs. 50/- more than a Sub-Deputy. I was accompanied by Purushottam Das, a peon, while on tour. He was very conscious of the dignity of his caste. He accompanied me to the wedding of Dr. Bana Bihari Patnaik's sister to Gopal at Banki. There he refused to take his meals at their house because he had not been invited separately. I was a subordinate of Madhu Babu. He was sympathetic towards me. The office was on the ground floor of a two-storied building in Old College Lane. There were three rooms on the upper storey that were unused. I set up house there on Madhu Babu's suggestion. The rent was fifteen rupees a month. The office and press of the Samaj was located at the entrance to the lane. Radhanath Babu was the manager of the Samaj. Gopabandhu Dash had passed away on June 17, 1928.

Radhanath Babu used to come to see me frequently. Our friendship began from that time. I moved to the upper storey of Jadunath Bhavan within a few months. I had to face a crisis once again during my stay there.

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# Disaster Strikes

Provincial Executive Service was a highly respectable job those days. Only I.C.S. was superior to it. One had to go to England for that. The preliminary competition took place in India. Those who were successful were sent to England for further studies and training. There were very few openings for the Service. Deputies and sub-deputies were selected every year in each province through a different process. There were no written examinations for the purpose. Selections were made on the basis of educational qualifications and personal interviews. Selections were made first in the districts. The selected candidates had to cross two further hurdles, one at the division level and finally, at the provincial level. A committee under the chairmanship of the home member held the final interview of candidates at the provincial level and selected as many candidates as were needed. The selected candidates joined in their jobs after they submitted themselves for a medical examination before the medical board.

I had been nominated as the best candidate from the district and the division even though I had not attended the interview because of illness. Ordinarily, four persons were being nominated for the post of the deputy magistrate at that time. One was a Bihari hindu, one muslim, one from Orissa and the fourth was from other communities. A government servant did not have to attend interviews at the district or division level. He was supposed to attend the final interview at the provincial level if his name was recommended by the highest authority. Jagannath Mishra, an Excise Inspector, was also a candidate from Orissa. I stood first among the candidates from Orissa in the final interview. However, Folly Sahib, board of revenue member and a member of the interview committee, insisted

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that Jagannath Mishra should be appointed as he was about to cross the age limit and it was his last chance to appear at the civil services examination. I still had one more year left. Thus, Jagannath Mishra was nominated while it was noted in the files that I would be appointed the next year. Fox Sahib, the D.P.I., Folly Sahib, the board of revenue member, Dwarika Prasad and Laxmidhar Mohanty were members of the interview board. Hammond Sahib, the home member, was the Chairman of the board. Only later I came to know why Folly Sahib insisted on the appointment of Jagannath Mishra even though they did not know each other. Folly Sahib was supposed to retire and go back to England in a few days. He had an Oriya servant for a long time. He requested the Sahib to do him a favour as the latter was leaving for England. The Sahib wanted to know what he could do for him. He said that the son of his landlord in the village, Muralidhar Jena, had applied for the job of the excise inspector. The landlord would gift him some cultivable land if his son would get that job. As a result, he would be able to manage on his own even after the departure of the Sahib. The Sahib asked him about the obstacles for Jena to get the job and he said that Jagannath Mishra was an applicant for the post of a deputy magistrate even as he was holding the job of an excise inspector. If Mishra would be selected as a deputy magistrate, the landlord's son could be adjusted in the post falling vacant. Therefore, Folly Sahib insisted that Jagannath Mishra should be appointed as a deputy magistrate even though he had secured the second position in the interview. The age limit was just an excuse. They believed that no injustice had been done to me because a post had been reserved for me for the next year. Such a reservation had also been made for me at the time of selection of state scholarship. The son of a landlord could arrange all these through a mere servant and I was deprived of what I rightfully deserved to get. Jagannath Mishra became a deputy magistrate and Muralidhar Jena joined as an excise inspector in his place. Jena retired later as an excise superintendent. This too was possible under British rule. Did it serve the purpose of justice that the claims of the most suitable candidate would be ignored in such an insidious manner? Everything went topsy-turvy because of the machinations of a servant. The Raja Saheb of Kanika was the executive councillor at that time. Laxmidhar Babu was staying with him at that time. He was sorry to hear all this. He called for the files of the interview board and saw that my name had been recommended for the following year. He reassured me. But I returned to Cuttack with a heavy heart.

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Another year passed at the income tax office. The time came again to apply for the post of the deputy magistrate. My application had to be forwarded by the income tax commissioner. I submitted an application to the commissioner and sent a copy to the collector of Puri. The commissioner wrote me that he was not going to forward my application. I went to Ranchi to meet him personally and requested him to change his decision. Harmohan Patnaik was the income tax officer at Ranchi. I stayed with him. Jonston Sahib was the commissioner. He was an I.C.S. officer. Meeting him was an experience one would not forget in his lifetime.

As I presented myself before him, he said, "I had written you a letter saying that I would not forward your application. Haven't you received it?"

I said, "Yes, I've received the letter. I've come here to request you to reconsider your decision. Please forward my application."

The Sahib said, "Your work is appreciated here. The assistant commissioner visited your office and reported that you are doing better than the income tax officer posted there. You would be promoted to the post of income tax officer. Why are you after the job of a deputy magistrate?"

I answered, "It would take about 11 years for me to be posted as an officer. My name has been recommended last year for the post of a deputy magistrate. It would help my cause if you kindly forward my application."

"What guarantee is there that you would be selected as a Deputy Magistrate? I have taken everything into consideration and decided not to forward your application," the Sahib said.

I said, "In that case, I've to resign from the job."

The Sahib said, "That would be stupid. What would you do if you do not get the job of the deputy magistrate?"

"I'll find enough space for myself to stand on my own feet." I answered.

The Sahib said that he had not seen such courage in any Indian.

I shot back that I was at least one Indian who had that kind of courage.

The Sahib asked me to sit quietly on a chair for ten minutes and think about what I had said. He rang the bell to call the peon and asked him to provide me with a chair. I did that. On second thought, I realized that I would be in a mess if I resigned from the job and was not selected as a deputy magistrate. But I had been so emphatic about resigning from the job. The Sahib would ridicule me now if I did not offer to resign. He was sure to take a dig at me that we Indians only talked big. He would

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scornfully narrate the incident in his club before other sahibs. I pondered over the entire matter. I decided to request him once more to forward my application. I would resign if he did not accede to my request. He called me after ten minutes and asked me about my decision. I repeated my request. When he declined, I offered to resign.

The Sahib said, "You are responsible for your decision. I've nothing to do with the matter. I do not think you have given enough thought to the matter. You are married. Have you consulted your wife before taking the decision? Have you sought the advice of your parents?"

I answered, "I had not sought anyone's advice as I had thought that you would forward my application if I made a request in person. I had never thought you would turn down my request."

I wrote out my resignation letter after that and requested him to relieve me of my charges. I reminded him that I had to present myself before the Collector of Puri in an unencumbered state so he would consider my application.

I took leave of him and took a rickshaw to come back. His peon reached me on a bicycle in a few minutes and said that the Sahib had summoned me. I thought he had perhaps changed his decision. But he extended an envelope to me which contained a testimonial of a high order. I thanked him and returned. I sat down on the rickshaw. There was darkness everywhere. Tears rolled down my cheeks. I had tried to be brave before the Sahib. But I was not so brave after all. Harmohan Babu sympathised with me when I informed him that I had resigned from my job. I returned to Cuttack by train, restless throughout the journey.

Father had been transferred to Balasore Zilla School by that time. I sent a telegram to him from Ranchi Railway Station asking him to come to Balasore Station. He was standing on the platform in the morning when I reached Balasore. He looked sad when I told him about my resignation. When he saw tears in my eyes, he consoled me by saying that nothing could be done about what had happened. I reached Cuttack and took a hackney from the railway station to my place. I found the postman waiting for me with a telegram from the collector of Puri. The telegram said that my application was not acceptable as it had not come through proper channel. I did not know what to do. I went to Puri the same night to meet the collector the next morning. When I reached Puri, I heard that interviews had been held a day before and recommendations had been sent to the office of the commissioner. And the collector had left for Balugaon on tour. I took a train to Balugaon the same night. Senapati Saheb, the

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collector, was having his breakfast when I reached the dak bungalow in the morning. Radhacharan Das, the S.D.O. of Khurda, was having some snack in a bowl in another room. He called me to him when he found me waiting in the corridor. I told him everything. He was thunderstruck when he heard everything. He could not believe that I had resigned from the job just like that. He asked me how I could do such a thing. He talked to me as if I was his own son. Senapati Saheb sent for me. He asked me right away whether I had received the telegram sent by his office. I said yes and added that I had resigned from my job. He called his steno and dictated a letter to the commissioner saying that the list sent earlier had to be revised and my name had to be at the top of the list from the district. He mentioned the extraordinary courage shown by the candidate in resigning from his job. I felt a bit reassured and returned to Cuttack.

I could not keep a family at Cuttack without a job. So I returned to the village with the family. My wife was sad; but she neither blamed me nor did she break down. On the other hand, it was I who had lost his nerve. I saw an advertisement in the newspaper for a tutor for the minor zemindar of Irada in Balasore at Rs. 75/- per month. His name was Mrityunjay Narayan Praharaj. I sent my application and got the letter of appointment. I joined in the job. The zemindari was under the Court of Wards. There was another zemindari called the Samanta Estate which was similarly placed. Sadhucharan Sahu, a sub-deputy, had been appointed as the manager by the Court of Wards for both the zemindaris. The minor zemindar lived with his mother and servants in a single-storied house in Gopalpur in Balasore. I was supposed to teach him there. He was studying at the Zilla School. Hence, I had to teach him in the morning and evening. I had to submit my joining report in the office of the sub-deputy. I felt humiliated. But I did not have any other option at the time. Father was transferred a few days later to Puri Zilla School. I took a two-roomed house in Choudhury Street on a rent of Rs. 5/- a month and brought my family there. I had to manage in a thatched house without a servant. The double-storied Jadunath Bhavan at Cuttack, the job of an Income Tax Inspector and servants at my beck and call—all these were distant dreams. My wife was all by herself with the two-year-old son. I met the collector of Balasore after about two months stay at Balasore. He was a muslim gentleman. The next day he wrote the manager to increase my salary to one hundred and twenty five rupees. I had not even requested him for a pay hike. He called me often after that and we talked about a variety of things.

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Gyanendra Brahma was the S.D.O., and Satish Chandra Mitra and Bhabagrahi Mishra were deputy magistrates in Balasore at that time. They knew from other sources how Jagannath Mishra became a deputy magistrate in stead of me. Everyone knew the inside story even in Cuttack and Puri. Brahma loved music. Music sessions were often held in his house near the railway station. He sent for me when such sessions were held. Satish Babu too came there. We became friends. I went to his house often. He lived with his widowed sister and her sons. I had snacks and tea in his house quite often. Bhabagrahi lived with his wife. I knew him from my Patna College days. He was a quiet, soft-spoken person. I cherished my friendship with these three gentlemen. Our friendship had continued until their death.

The time came for the interview to be held at Patna. Four persons were to be selected as deputy magistrate that year. One Bihari hindu, one muslim, one domiciled Bengali and one from Orissa were to be selected. The interview continued for a long time as there were a large number of candidates. The interview board had the same members as last year except for Folly Sahib. There was another sahib in his place. I returned to Balasore after I came to know that I was the only candidate selected for the post from Orissa. I waited for the call from the Medical Board.

Rai Bahadur Lokanath Mishra of Puri, who was a member of the legislative council, wrote me a letter on his own from Patna that I had been selected as a deputy magistrate. He also informed me that the proposal had been passed in the legislative council and had been sent to the Governor for his approval. Sudarshan Panigrahi worked as the secretary of Godavarish Mishra in an unofficial capacity. He also worked as an agent for the Life Insurance Corporation. Both he and Godavarish Mishra were in Patna at the time. He too wrote me that I had been selected as a deputy magistrate. He advised me to take a life insurance policy from him when I received the first month's pay. However, there was still no call from the medical board. So I sent a telegram to Pitambar Mishra, vakil, to enquire about it. He sent me a telegram to say that I had been eliminated in the final stage. I received a letter two days later which explained everything in detail. I cannot express in words the grief I felt when I came to know about everything.

There was dual administration in the province. There were two ministers and two executive councillors. Fakruddin and Ganesh Singh Dutta were ministers. After the file was sent to the Governor for his approval, Ganesh Singh Dutta requested him to appoint his distantly

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related nephew as a deputy magistrate. The Board had not recommended the name of the nephew. However, he was crossing the age limit to appear at the civil services examination that year. Hence, the minister tried to influence the Governor. The Governor told him that he could not do so as four names had already been recommended for the four posts. But the intelligent minister pleaded that the job of a deputy magistrate may not be given to a candidate from Orissa that year. In stead, two sub-deputys should be promoted to the position of deputy magistrate. Orissa would be happy with that and the minister's nephew could be adjusted in my place. The Governor yielded to the pressure of the minister and a fresh memorandum was sent to the legislative council in this vein. Hammond Sahib agreed to the proposal while the Raja of Kanika opposed it and wrote out a long comment. That did not help. Finally, the Governor ordered that the nephew of the minister should be appointed as another Bihari Hindu. Purna Chandra Mohanty and Satish Chandra Banerjee from Orissa were promoted as Deputy Magistrates. They got what they never expected. I lost whatever I had hoped for. The ground slipped from under my feet yet again at the last moment just as it had in case of post graduate scholarship, state scholarship and appointment as a deputy magistrate the first time. I recalled the warning of the commissioner of income tax that I would be on the streets if I resigned from my job. Finally, that came to pass. I had no other option except to conclude that fate had dealt me a raw deal.

In this manner, I was deprived of what was rightfully due to me five times in a row because of the manipulations of other people. I should have known earlier that I was not cut out for a job. I wanted to be an advocate from my childhood. I had told Barrister B.N. Mishra in my childhood at Chaibasa that I wanted to be a lawyer. I made several efforts to go against this childhood wish. Finally, I got wise. I started preparing for the law examination. I refused to accept the position of the munsif or district judge when the offer was made to me in later life. I again said no when gazette notification was made that I had been appointed as the permanent advocate of the supplies department. I said no to the offer of becoming the advocate of Cuttack when Senapati Saheb was the revenue commissioner. A burnt curry has no flavour.

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# THE ZEMINDAR OF IRADA

The Zemindar of Irada belonged to a place called Iradagarh near Basta. The zemindari had been divided into four parts. Golak Narayan Praharaj, Joy Narayan Praharaj and Ram Narayan Praharaj each had a share. Ram Narayan was the youngest. He was proficient in Sanskrit. He died all of a sudden at a very young age. His only son Mrityunjay was a minor then, and hence, his share was being supervised by the Court of Wards. One part of his zemindari was in Dolasahi, midway between Bhadrak and Chandbali. They had a large thatched house there. They lived in that house at times. Occasionally, they went to their house in Iradagarh too. I accompanied them to those places. Mrityunjay's mother was religious and affectionate. She loved my wife as a daughter. I too received a great deal of her affection. As a result, I never felt as if I was serving there as a tutor. I was treated as a family member. Mrityunjay had the temperament of a zemindar. Manu Babu, a distant relative of theirs who belonged to Midnapore, lived with them as the guardian. For some reason unknown to me, he concluded that there had been a great deal of change in the behaviour of Sadhu Babu, the manager, after I took up the job of the tutor. Sadhu Babu had turned more empathetic and active in managing the zemindari after I came to the picture. Sadhu Babu was perhaps more careful as I was close to the collector. The Muslim collector was transferred and Arun Bose came in his place as the collector. He was slightly dark but was of a cheerful nature. He had been promoted as a collector from the position of a deputy magistrate because of his efficiency. I became quite close to him in a few days. I could not understand how I became so friendly with officers of higher rank so quickly. I never had too many friends. I was all along a very careful person. I believed in

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maintaining a distance from people. In a nutshell, I have all along been a loner.

There was some dispute between Joy Narayan and Golak Narayan. Joy Narayan, his wife, son and daughter were killed by some unidentified assassin at Irada one night. Only one daughter had been left alive. The assassin had thought that the girl had died and left her. Golak Narayan was held responsible for the murders and a suit was filed against him in the Sessions Court. The trial continued for more than one month. Birendra Sasmal, an eminent barrister from Midnapore, was Golak Narayan's advocate. His original surname was Samal and in fact he was an Oriya. But he had changed his surname to Sasmal in order to pass as a Bengali. While the agitation for unification of all Oriya-speaking areas was supported by others from Midnapore, Sasmal opposed it. He asked rhetorically if Orissa had produced someone like Rabindranath Tagore or Sarat Chatterjee. He saw no merit in leaving Bengal and becoming a part of Orissa. Chintamani Acharya from Cuttack had been appointed by the government to fight the case against Golak Narayan. I used to attend the court every day when the trial was going on. There was no doubt in my mind that Birendra Sasmal was an efficient advocate. Golak Narayan and his associates were sentenced to imprisonment after the trial. The same sentence was passed even after an appeal was made. The surviving daughter of Joy Narayan was later married to Ramachandra Das of Mayurbhanj. He was our classmate. He was the superintendent of police in the Mayurbhanj State. After the annexation of the princely states, he came to the Orissa cadre and finally retired as an Inspector General of Police. Paresh and Bhabesh were his twin sons. Paresh worked as a manager in the Titaghur Paper Mills. Bhabesh worked in a managerial capacity in a factory in Chicago in the United States. Rama Babu's eldest son Ramesh was the manager of a tea garden in Darjeeling. He lives now in Baripada.

Mrityunjay's mother had once stayed for more than one month at Puri along with her son. I was also with them. Sadhu Babu had a small house at the Mochi Sahi Square of Puri. All of us stayed there. Panka Babu (Lokanath Mishra) was the editor of a newspaper 'Puribasi' at that time. Pandit Kabyakantha Sadasiv Mishra was the editor of the newspaper earlier. Panka Babu was his adopted son and had taken over the job of the editor after the death of his father. I lent a helping hand to Panka Babu to write the editorials and other articles while I was in Puri. Sadhu Babu's house was small. Therefore, Mrityunjay and I went to the Veda Karmakanda Vidyalaya during the morning hours to study. The

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Kabyakantha had established that school. Panka Babu had got us the permission to study there.

I took fifteen days leave from my job in early 1931 to come to Cuttack to appear at the Law Examination. Baikuntha with his wife and Kalindi with his family shared a house in Jachuk Lane of Cuttack. Kalindi joined in a job with the Cuttack Cooperative Bank after completing his B.A. Baikuntha was a school teacher. He had passed B.T. from Patna after completing his B.A. He passed M.A. in Oriya later as a private candidate. He became the headmaster of Puri Zilla School and the inspector of schools. He served as a lecturer in Oriya for some time before his retirement. He had married in 1931 in an aristocratic Karan family of Ramchandi Sahi in Puri through the intervention of Kalindi. Kalindi belonged to Ramchandi Sahi. They were close friends in the college. They became even closer later and shared the same house. I came to stay with them. Baikuntha's nephew, Brindaban, also stayed there and was preparing for the Law examination. I came there in the hope of getting some books from Brindaban. Kalindi's younger brother Bhagabati (eminent Marxian litterateur and youth leader at a later stage) also stayed there. I had an opportunity to stay with my friends and study with Brindaban. I returned to Balasore after the examination. The results came out. I had passed while Brindaban had failed. Brindaban later became a sub-deputy and retired as a deputy magistrate.

I stayed in a rented house that belonged to Asraf Ali, a retired sub-registrar and a lover of literature. He loved to discuss literature when we met. His house was adjacent to the house I had taken on rent. He spent most of his time in reading and writing. I had sold him my typewriter for one hundred rupees when I needed money urgently. I had bought it when I was an inspector of income tax. It was always enjoyable to talk to him. His sons studied at the college. I talked to them often when they came home in vacations. One of the sons, Maiuddin Ahmed, had become an I.A.S. officer. He has established a huge Urdu library at Buxibazar in Cuttack. He had gone for his Haj pilgrimage. He was actively associated with several social programmes. I had met Asraf Ali about a year before his death when I had gone to Balasore on some work. He was around a hundred year old by that time. He was sitting on a bed on the floor amidst a large number of books and notebooks. He was extremely happy to see me. He praised me a great deal for my small achievements in life. He loved me like a son. Such people are a rarity these days.

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Mrityunjay's mother came to Cuttack along with her son just before the *Durga Puja* in 1931. They stayed in the *Samanta Nivas* in Mohammadiya Bazar. That house belonged to the Zemindar of Sunahat in Balasore. I too stayed with them. I took leave of them in a few days after extending my gratitude to them and started practicing law on the 1st September, 1931. The first phase of my career as a tutor was in Kaligali in March 1928. The second phase was in the Sukinda Palace in August 1928. The third phase was in Balasore which was of a much longer duration.

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# Making Debut as a Lawyer

So I was back to square one. I could not become a professor. I could not become a deputy magistrate. I chucked the job of an income tax officer. In a way, I was forced to go into law practice that had always lurked inside me from my childhood. I would have been a lawyer before four years had I thought about it seriously after my studies in Patna. My friend Gopal was already a *vakil* in the Patna High Court for some time. I did not have the wherewithal to start practicing law at Patna. To be truthful, it was even audacious on my part to start as a lawyer at Cuttack. I belonged to a *mofussil* village in Puri. I knew virtually no one in Cuttack. True, I worked as an inspector of income tax for more than a year. But there was hardly any opportunity to interact with people at that time. The educated circle in Cuttack knew about my misfortunes in connection with the state scholarship and the job of the deputy magistrate. As a result, I drew sympathy from professors and lawyers at Cuttack. The matter had been often discussed among the lawyers. Laxmidhar Mohanty, who was a lawyer and was on the interview board for the selection of deputy magistrates, had often discussed the injustice meted out to me in discussions at several places including the bar association. The Raja Saheb of Kanika and his eldest son Shailendra Narayan Bhanja Deo had also discussed the matter with many people. I had shrunk into myself the first day I went to the court in view of all these. I felt as if I had been defeated in all other spheres and had embraced the practice of law as a refugee. I had been attracted to the atmosphere of the High Court while I was

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studying in Patna. How could such a small place like Cuttack give me any satisfaction? I sat in the Judge Court for a while. When I came out to the corridor, I found Brajabandhu Das, a lawyer, making flattering comments about me to some people. He was telling them what I had told the commissioner of income tax while resigning from the job of the income tax officer, how I had won an all-India competition at Benaras, how the Bihari minister had eliminated me at the last moment to get the job of the deputy magistrate for his nephew and so forth. I blushed profusely. Braja Babu was a leader in the agitation for the unification of Orissa. He was fully abreast of all the political developments. He was an expert in review of news. He had looked upon me favourably from the day we met till his death. Lokanath Das, his elder brother, was also a liberal at heart. He practiced law for some time in Patna and returned to Cuttack. The two brothers had not made much progress in the practice of law. But they were liked and appreciated by every one.

The lawyers took notice of me because of the flattering words spoken about me by Braja Babu. All these events had taken place a long time ago. But Braja Babu presented everything in such a manner that the idea gradually took roots that I had all the qualities to be a good lawyer. My inferiority complex vanished in the process. I felt elated for no reason while returning from the court. I had come with all kinds of apprehensions. But I was returning happily. I wondered how all this could come about. Such good fortune came to very few lawyers on the first day. I stayed awake that night to thank the gods. I informed my father and wife that I had been directed by some supernatural power to go into law practice. Father worked as a teacher in the Puri Zilla School at the time. Mother was with him along with my brothers and sisters. Lawyers were highly regarded in the society at the time. Madhusudan Das, Janakinath Bose (father of Subhas Bose), Subodh Chandra Chatterjee, Satyanarayan Sengupta, Bichitrananda Das, Subbarao and Satish Chandra Basu were the eminent lawyers of Cuttack at the time. All of them dealt with civil cases. Madhu Babu was the eldest among them and in broken health. He had earned huge amount of money in the past. But he also had a lot of debts and had been declared an insolvent. Everyone respected him. But he had very few briefs at the time. Except for Bichitrananda Babu, the others were non-Oriyas. Madhu Babu usually talked in Bengali. He spoke in fluent Oriya and English in public meetings though. Not only in the practice of law, the Bengalis also dominated the practice of medicine. Bichitrananda Babu and Satyanarayan Babu were the followers of

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Congress. Janaki Babu also belonged to the same group. The others were independents. Laxmidhar Mohanty, Bhikari Charan Patnaik, Chintamani Acharya, Birakishoe Ray, Gopal Chandra Praharaj, Banchhanidhi Mohapatra and others were associates of the government. Birakishore Babu was proficient in criminal suits. At a later stage, he also excelled in civil suits. There were several juniors working for the leading lawyers. They followed their seniors in supporting the congress or the government. A few of them were apathetic towards the problems faced by the country. Gopal Chandra Ray, Sarat Chandra Chakroborty, Sarat Chandra Pal, Bipin Bihari Mitra, Jadunath Mitra, Nagendra Nath Mitra, Panchanan Mukherjee, Priyanath Mukherjee, Gyanendra Bose, Rebati Kanta Ghosh, Mayadhar Das, Ramachandra Dash, Pareswar Mohanty, Dharmananda Mohanty, etc. had a lot of briefs in the Munsif Court. Many young lawyers were also on the scene. From among them, Souri Prasad Mohapatra, Bidhu Prasad Mohapatra, Rabindranath Singh, Hari Charan Mukherjee, Lalit Dasgupta, Haridas Sen and Anathabandhu Ray had a circle of their own. I was close to these people from the beginning.

A new lawyer has to work as a junior under an elderly lawyer in the beginning to get acquainted with the work. I found that the leading lawyers had a number of juniors. I would have found a place for myself as a junior with a leading lawyer if I had approached some of them. But, for some reason, I decided not to approach anyone and get started on my own. This was something unprecedented. I do not think that this move of mine was appreciated by anyone. I had not done that out of arrogance. It was perhaps a show of boldness. I faced a lot of problems in the beginning as a result. But I was also amply rewarded for this decision at a later stage. Why should anyone engage an unknown lawyer? How could anyone rely on him? Those who had a large number of briefs also had a large number of juniors. Why should they take me as a junior? Those lawyers, with whom I was on friendly terms, were themselves struggling to survive. How could they help me? Thus, I kept waiting for miracles to happen.

A junior lawyer is appointed by the court at nominal fees for a minor in a civil case if the guardian of the minor does not present himself in court. This work is assigned to new and young lawyers. I got a few such appointments. Something was better than nothing. In one such case, Mani Sahoo, a prominent businessman of Buxi Bazar, was a party, and he had filed a suit against one Trinatha Sahoo, a small shopkeeper, to recover his dues. A minor brother of Trinatha Sahoo had also been made a party by Mani Sahoo. I had been appointed as a lawyer for that minor boy. Mani

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Sahoo stood up to give evidence when the trial was held in the court of Mohammed Ibrahim, a muslim munsif from Bihar. Giving evidence was just perfunctory in such cases. Only the defendant's lawyer put up a defense. The lawyer of the minor just had to make an appearance in order to get his fees from the court. Mani Sahoo was getting down from the witness box with a condescending smile on his face after answering the very few questions posed by the defendant's lawyer. I stood up at that time to cross-examine the witness on behalf of the minor. The munsif pretended not to have seen me and signed on the papers as if the cross-examination was over. I stood my ground. He asked me what I wanted. When I said that I wanted to cross-examine the witness on behalf of the minor, he gave a wry smile. But there was no way he could turn down my request. The minor was also a party and he had the same rights as the other defendants. Mani Sahoo went back to the witness box with a displeased face. I asked a few questions on the documents on the basis of which the plaintiff had made the claims. Mani Sahoo stammered. I argued that the documents may not be relied upon by the court and the court accepted my contention. The case was dismissed. I was extremely encouraged by the favourable comments of the court that a new lawyer had taken a great deal of pain to cross-examine the witness on behalf of a minor. I felt even more flattered by the comments of the court officials and other persons present there. The matter spread all around the court premises. My fee was only four rupees. But I received a lot of adulations. Mani Sahoo lost the case, and hence, I had expected him to be angry with me. He had a shop in Cuttack malgodown. He had landed property outside Cuttack too. He attended court almost every day. He had a few cases of his own. But he derived a great deal of pleasure in involving himself in other people's cases too. People gathered in his house every morning to seek advice on court matters including engagement of lawyers. Mani Sahoo came to the court after lunch in his hackney carriage. He had to make a round of the court once a day even if he did not have any work there. I was surprised to see Mani Sahoo arrive at my house the next day with a few people. He not only praised me for my efforts but also engaged me as the lawyer in three cases where the others accompanying him were involved. From that day onwards till his death, Mani Sahoo took my help in many of his own as well as others' cases. He sold his paddy fields and coconut grove in Odasmal in Puri measuring about 34 acres to me for fourteen thousand rupees. He had also sold a building in Pathuria Sahi of Puri to me. He was not educated; but he had a large heart. He was the owner of the seventy two *kirtan* groups of Cuttack. He was considered to

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be a leading figure of the oilmen community of Cuttack and was a person who was highly respected by the community.

A few cases came my way after the case of Mani Sahoo. I did not have any junior. So I had to do a lot of research on my own. Sometimes, I discovered new paths on my own. I could never relax unless I tied up all the loose ends in a case. That needed a lot more work than would be considered sufficient ordinarily. In the process, I developed a distinct style of preparing for a case and presenting it in court. It was different from others. My petitions, arguments and counter-arguments were different. Hence, I had been able to draw the attention of others. It was immaterial whether it was a minor or a major case, a straightforward or complex case, and whether I got a fee or not. Once I took a case into my hands, I always gave my best to it. No one would believe that I had slogged for thirteen hours in the Mani Sahoo case. Others would not have given it even thirteen minutes. I had examined all the relevant documents minutely to understand everything clearly. I went through the law books assiduously to find the loopholes. Above all, I had given the case a great deal of thought. Had I considered the case as one that paid a measly four rupees as fees and if I would have accepted the fact that a minor's lawyer had virtually no role to play in such a case, my first case would never have given me the fillip that I got as a lawyer. I also got a few income tax cases as I had worked for a while in the Income Tax Department. A person voluntarily offered to work as my assistant. I got a great deal more than what a new lawyer gets when he starts out in the profession. All this was possible by the grace of God. I was earning much more than what I could have earned in a job. As a result, the past ceased to haunt me any more. Everyone came to know of the conspiracies made against me to deprive me of my rightful dues. And I did not have to go hungry for lack of work.

I found a house in Oriya Bazar in front of the Brahmo Samaj at a rent of fifteen rupees a month. I brought my family to Cuttack again. My son Prabhat had been born before I took up the job with the Income Tax Department. My daughter Sumitra was born in May 1931 just before I started practicing law. The son's nickname was Baby and the daughter was called Mini. There was a purpose in calling them so. I knew that Naba Bhai (Nabakrushna Choudhury) used to call someone as Baby. He called his wife Malati Choudhury as Minu. I myself had taken a name from a Bengali magazine to call my wife Ili. All my friends called her by that name. She was called Piri in her father's house. My mother, aunt and others called her by that name.

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It was strange that I lived in Oriya Bazar when I resigned from my income tax job and left Cuttack. I had to come back to the same Oriya Bazar to stay when I chose a different profession. There were two thatched rooms in the front. Two *pucca* rooms at the back. There was a well on the pucca courtyard. There were two more thatched rooms. One was used as a kitchen. The other was used as a store-cum-prayer room. My wife had placed an image of Mahalaxmi and a picture of Rama, Laxman and Sita on a base made of brass in that room to worship. One of the rooms in the front was large. I made it my office. The other was used as a passage. The house owner had a bed in that room. It served as a guest room. Mahendra Bhuyan had joined as an assistant engineer at Cuttack at that time. I borrowed a table from him and started my office. I bought a new table two years later and returned Bhuyan's table to him. I bought some inexpensive chairs. I also put an armchair in the room. The office now looked good. Janakinath Bose's house was about sixty paces away from my house. It was a double-storied building. A few days after I set up home, Janaki Babu one day dropped in at my office while returning from his morning walk. He looked around the office and said, "Crowded with furniture. Very nice." I had no idea whether he was ridiculing me or encouraging me. But I was gratified by his comment. It was hard to imagine that Janaki Babu would set his foot in the house of an unknown junior. His own house and office were tastefully decorated. I considered it to be my good fortune that he noticed my thatched office room. He talked to me pleasantly for a long time that day. As he left, he said, "Come whenever you like. You are always welcome." I was ecstatic. Janaki Babu talked to us in Bengali and English. He questioned witnesses in Bengali. All Bengali lawyers of the same ilk asked questions in Bengali likewise. The witnesses replied in Oriya. Young Bengali lawyers asked questions in Oriya. Janaki Babu was held in the same esteem as Mr. Das (Madhusudan Das). Everyone appreciated his handsome looks, smiling face, soft-spoken voice and nice words. But he could not socialize easily. He maintained his distance from others. He was a government lawyer for a long period of time.

There was a boundary wall in front of the house with a gate. I had planted a few croton and other plants in the space between the boundary wall and the entrance to the house. Biswanath Kar often complimented me for the small garden. Others were somewhat amazed. The environment of my office looked different from that of most lawyers.

Three other elderly Bengali lawyers lived between my house and Janaki Babu's house. Two of them were brothers and shared a house on

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rent. They were the relations of Janaki Babu. They had no practice virtually. But they sat in the bar every day from ten to four. The elder brother was proficient in sharpening pencils. He did not mind sharpening the pencils of other lawyers. Ball pens had not come into vogue as yet. The other lawyer was Priya Babu. He was fair, tall, amiable, and a clever lawyer. He was neatly dressed and soft-spoken. The three of them shared a hackney on rent to commute to the court. I joined them. The rent was shared four ways. That increased my esteem in the court. All junior lawyers walked to the court. Only a few lawyers had bicycles.

Ruben Saheb, I.C.S. was the district judge at that time. He was a Parsi. I sat in his court when I did not have any work elsewhere. I did not have any interest in the lower court dealing with criminal cases. I kept waiting for the circuit bench to arrive from the Patna High Court. Bihar and Orissa separated from Bengal to become a new province. The High Court was established in Patna after that and all relations were severed with the Calcutta High Court. Two judges came to Orissa from Patna High Court three to four times a year to hold the circuit bench. They held court for three to four weeks at a stretch. Those who were listed as vakils and advocates had the right to work in a High Court or Circuit Court. One had to be a pleader for three years before being eligible to be an advocate. I liked to sit in the circuit court and watch the proceedings even before I had completed three years as a pleader. I sat in the judge court when the circuit court was not in session. Ruben Saheb, the district judge, had perhaps noticed me sitting often in his court. About three months after I joined the bar, the District Judge's *peskar* asked me one day if I would fight a case on behalf of a poor accused in the Sessions Court. The district judge could appoint a lawyer for an accused if he was unable to pay the fees to engage a lawyer for himself. The fees were payable by the government in such a case. It was beyond expectation for a rooky junior like me to get such an opportunity. About two months after my engagement, the trial ran for four days. Chintamani Acharya was the government pleader who had taken the brief against the accused. At times, he made sarcastic comments on my abilities as a lawyer. The case was about arson. The accused was sentenced which meant that I lost the case. But my efforts were appreciated inside and outside the court.

The Samaj Press was located in a rented double-storied house in a corner of the old college lane near Nimchouri. The newspaper was being published as a weekly at that time. Radhanath Babu (Rath) was almost always in the office supervising the publication of the newspaper. Lingaraj

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Babu (Mishra) was also closely associated with this work. All the news about the congress and the country were available there. I went there on most days after returning from the court because of my intimacy with Radhanath Babu, my bond with the *Samaj* and my relationship with the Satyabadi School from childhood. I gave him some news about which I was aware. In return, he gave me the news available with him. Radhanath Babu came to my house too at times. The newspaper 'Asha' was being published as a daily from Berhampur since 1928. Sasibhusan Rath was its capable editor. He had borrowed just Rs. 500/- from the King of Badakhemundi and was publishing the newspaper as a weekly from April 13, 1913. The Asha had given wide coverage to the severe drought that had taken place in the Ghumusar area. This had brought about a lot of pressure on the Madras government. As a result, a sum of forty lakh rupees had been sanctioned to tackle the drought. The Asha became a daily in 1928 shortly after the death of Utkalmani Gopabandhu. Sasi Babu had carried the press and the newspaper to Cuttack in 1939. But he took everything back to Berhampur when his health failed. He brought out an English magazine called New Orissa from 1939 May. His contribution to journalism in Orissa was commendable. His younger brother Ranganath Mahapatra had invented the Oriya typewriter and gained prominence. He was distantly related to me. He came to my house when he came to Cuttack. He persuaded me to send news to the Asha from Cuttack. My involvement in public life was reignited along with my profession as a lawyer. I attended most of the meetings held in Cuttack. I sent news about the proceedings of those meetings, news from the court and other news. All these were being carried in the Asha. I also started sending news about Orissa to the Statesman being published from Calcutta. I got some honorarium for that too. I became known in the public as I was involved in public life with such famous lawyers as Bichitrananda Das, Satyanarayan Sengupta and Bhikari Charan Patnaik. I also became known outside Cuttack when news items sent by me got published in newspapers. Notices or appeals for public meetings were being published in the names of a few specified persons at that time. These were being distributed among the public. No daily newspaper was being published from Cuttack at the time. The names of Bichitrananda Das, Satyanarayan Sengupta, Rangalal Modi (from among the Marwaris), Ahmed Bux (from among the Muslims), Reverend Brajanand Das (from among the Christians) and my name (representing the youth) appeared regularly in such notices. If it was a meeting held by the congress party, the names of Gopabandhu Choudhury, Jadumani Mangaraj, Bichitrananda Babu, Satyanarayan Babu

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and my name appeared on the appeal letters, Notices carried the names of of Biswanath Kar, Laxmidhar Mohanty, Chintamani Acharya, Bhikari Charan Patnaik, Ahmed Bux, Brajananda Das and Dewan Bahadur Srikrushna Mohapatra (retired superintentendent of police) if meetings were held in support of the government. Almost all the meetings were held in the town hall. Many anti-government meetings were held on our signatures. It was not as if all these did not influence my law practice. I got an opportunity to come to public life because of my law practice. I was not confined to my profession alone. I got some recognition automatically inside and outside the court. My relationship with Tripathy Saheb and Parija Saheb were renewed after I started practicing. Nirmal Chandra Banerjee, the history professor, was the secretary of the Old Boys' Association of Ravenshaw College and he was enlisting new members. I was made a member. An indirect relationship developed with the College. The eareier intimacy with Kalindi, Baikuntha and Sarat was renewed after a gap of years. Sarat became a deputy magistrate after completing B.A. Baikuntha was a teacher and Kalindi was an employee of the cooperative Bank. They were in Cuttack in 1931. Sarat was the assistant registrar of Cuttack Cooperative Society and Kalindi was an employee of the Cuttack Central Cooperative Bank. Baikuntha was a teacher in collegiate school. Our friendship had flourished in meeting together, talking about the future, and discussing about literature and social reforms. We were extremely close to each other, addressing each other by the Oriya personal pronouns of '*tu*' and '*tume*'. It sounds odd now to write about them, giving due respect to each of them. Our wives were equally close. Baikuntha's wife Adarmani was 'Ada', Kalindi's wife Ratnamani was 'Ratna', Sarat's wife was 'Shanti' and my wife was 'Ili' in our circle. They often met along with us. At times, they had a get together on their own.

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# College Commemoration

Fifty years have passed since the Ravenshaw College Commemoration was held. It was started sometime in 1932 or 1933 with the inspiration and encouragement of Parija Saheb. Sir C.V. Raman, the physicist, had graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. T.S. McPherson, Judge of the Patna High Court, presided over the meeting. He had come to Cuttack to attend the Circuit Bench. The Principal of the College, Parija Saheb, Tripathy Saheb and Baba Kartar Singh were present along with the two guests on the decorated pandal covered with a canopy. These four professors belonged to the I.E.S. cadre. Students, invited guests and old boys sat on chairs and benches in front of the pandal on the lawn. Prizes were awarded to competitors who had been successful in debates and games after the introductory remarks were made. Those who had successfully competed in chess were also awarded prizes. The old boys were invited thereafter to speak. I saw no one getting up. So I decided to go and speak a few words. I had just about completed one year in my law practice by that time. I was a rooky by all counts. Many professors gave me a derisive look and I realized that it was stupid on my part to get up to address such a distinguished assembly. But there was no way I could retrace my steps. In my speech, I made a comment in lighter vein that the *Mahabharat War* had taken place because of the game of dice. By introducing a game like chess in the hostels, there was the possibility that a similar major catastrophe might take place in the college. Someone in the crowd was amused and clapped. But it was followed by a lot of clapping. Sir C.V. Raman stood up to address the gathering as the laughter was dying down. He took the cue from my speech and started his lecture with the game of dice. He explained how life itself was a game of

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dice and how people faced problems in life because of the uncertainties associated with this game of dice. Finally, he took a genial dig at Baba Kartar Singh and amused the audience by talking about the chemistry laboratory and polarization. McPherson Sahib also referred to the game of dice in his presidential address and said that he had found it out from experience that the game of chess was an enjoyable pastime inside the house during the rainy days. Both Raman and McPherson openly asked Parija Saheb my name during the course of their speech. I was slightly flustered. No one had imagined that my comment in a lighter vein would gain such prominence in the meeting. The matter was discussed a great deal after the meeting was over and I received a bit of adulation from everyone present. This was a memorable incident for me. I found many lawyers discussing my lecture in the court the next day. The elderly lawyer Rebati Kanta Ghosh, who was very fair and was always smartly attired in white and chewed *paan* incessantly, spoke loudly to me in front of everyone, "Harihar, you spoke very well yesterday. You had the guts to address such a huge gathering. Congratulations! I'm sure you'll do very well as a lawyer." Rebati Babu never spoke in a soft voice. He talked loudly even at his home. He came from an aristocratic family. They were two brothers. His brother Nalini Kanta was an officer of high rank in administration. Rebati Kanta retired as a District Judge. Nalini Kanta retired as district magistrate. Rebati Babu was a nationalist. He was a patriot from the days of the division of Bengal. He was an active official of the Orissa Domiciled Bengali Association. He did not mince words when he spoke. After making his comment, he patted me kindly on my back. Suddenly I felt ten feet tall among the lawyers and court officials present at the time. The matter spread rapidly by word of mouth. I was a bit flustered. Nevertheless, I expressed my gratitude to God silently. His blessing was all that mattered. In a way, my public life started from this lecture. It also had an effect on my law practice in an indirect manner. I was no longer an unknown rookie. I was invited to almost all the functions of the college. I delivered a lecture once in a function of the West Hostel which brought me a lot of adulations from Narayan Mishra, the Superintendent. That established my relationship with the student community which continues to this day. Chintamani Acharya, the Vice Chancellor of Utkal University, and I had met Sir C.V. Raman in his residence when we had gone to attend the centenary celebrations of Madras University about twenty years after the commemoration. He asked that day if I was the same boy who had made a caustic comment on the game of dice at the commemoration. I was amazed that he had

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remembered the incident even after such a long time. Chintamani Babu said that he was also present in that meeting.

The convocations on later occasions have been graced by many distinguished persons. We had the opportunity of listening to Sir Iqbal, Sir Rasammud, Sarojini Naidu and Rajagopalachari on such occasions. The Commemorations were held on the same scales and were as important as convocation until the Utkal University was established in 1943. The common people of Cuttack waited expectantly for this event. A number of exhibitions were organised that day in the different rooms of the college. Many people gathered to see the attractive scientific experiments on display. A few old students also came from outside Cuttack. Prof. Nirmal Chandra Banerjee went around Cuttack on his bicycle to contact old students in order to enlist them as life members at Rs. 25/- and ordinary members at Re. 1/-. A receipt book was always there in his bag. Whenever he ran into an old student, he made him a member. The Old Boys Association had turned out to be such a huge and distinguished organisation that it had the right of nominating one member to the Senate of Patna University. Prof. Banerjee was responsible for all this. I had filed my nomination paper for that election in 1934 on the advice of Parija Saheb. Laxmidhar Mohanty (Member, Bihar-Orissa Council and the Deputy Speaker) was also a candidate. He had written me a letter from Ranchi to withdraw my nomination. I had not done that. I lost in the election. But I was happy that I had received the support of elderly people like Bipin Bihari Ray, Arta Ballav Mohanty and Barada Kanta Chatterjee.

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# Sabuja Sahitya Samiti

Annada was in Bengal by 1931. He decided to bid goodbye to Oriya literature after completing B.A. He decided to work in Bengal after succeeding in I.C.S. He believed he could make a mark in Bengali literature if he was in touch with Bengali literature, environment and people. Bengali literature had a much greater circumference than Oriya literature. That was another attraction. But his love for Orissa, Oriya literature and Oriya friends had not diminished in any way. There was a permanent base for friends like us when I started practicing law at Cuttack. The others were in transferable jobs. That made coordination difficult. Incidentally, Baikuntha, Kalindi, Sarat and I stayed at Cuttack at the same time. The Nonesense Club of our college days found expression in a different way. A permanent literary organisation and a printed monthly magazine were our cherished desires. Our imaginations ran amuck in this regard. It was difficult to imagine the hard work involved in a new project unless and until it was set in motion. Sarat was the most hardworking among the five of us. Baikuntha was the advisor, Kalindi selected the articles to be published and I was the liaison man. In our excitement, we lost sight of the fact that we might get separated from each other like logs of wood in a river on spate. However, we assumed that the opportunity to work together had arrived just the way we had the opportunity of dreaming together in the college. Annada's sympathy and assurances of cooperation created even more possibilities for our unity. Imagination runs wild in youth. There was no escape when five persons got together to dream. Creating literature was only one aspect. Making a profit on our combined capital made our dreams more colourful. Sarat was an expert in accounts. He explained to the rest of us that we could make money out of the venture if we contributed articles ourselves and published them along

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with contribution from others. Baikuntha was restless at the time in search of a woman. Kalindi was aware of village belles seeking eye while pursuing in faraway cooperative society work. I was keen on social recognition and status. Sarat was enamoured with professional skills. He persuaded us to form a cooperative society to publish books relating to literature and a magazine. We thought it would be easy to form a cooperative society as Sarat and Kalindi worked in the cooperative department. We had never given any thought to the fact that cooperative societies could not prosper in our country. Sarat painted a bright future for the publishing organisation contemplated by us. Insects were eager to jump whether there was a fire or not. All that mattered was that it should look golden. The publishing organisation was named the *Sabuja Sahitya Samiti*. It seemed novel because of the addition of the word 'Sabuja' (green). We had never thought of calling our literary discussion or creation as green during our college days or thereafter. The word 'sabuja' was not commonly used in Oriya those days. A magazine called '*Sabuja Patra*' was being published at that time from Bengal. The word 'sabuja' had been used at times in the poems of Rabindranath. Annada had written a poem called '*Sabujapari*' and Baikuntha had written a poem called '*Sabujabandhu*' around 1925 while we were studying in the college. '*Sabja sabji*' in colloquial Oriya meant fresh vegetables. Thus, the word 'sabuja' implied something fresh. It has been often alleged that we had borrowed the word from Bengali. It's true that we had named our publishing organisation as the Sabuja Sahitya Samiti. But others had named our group as '*Sabuja Gosthi*'. Similarly, our literary creations were named 'Sabuja Literature' and our era as 'Sabuja Era' by others. The word 'sabuja' has been accepted into the Oriya literature since then. The word was not in use in ancient Oriya, Bengali or Hindi. The word 'green' in English also implies freshness.

Sarat was in charge of collecting manuscripts, running to the press and keeping of accounts. He did it of his own volition. Kalindi, Baikuntha and I were superficial. Kalindi did most of the proof correction. I was given the responsibility of editing a monthly magazine called Yugavina. It was not the mouthpiece of the Sabuja Sahitya Samiti. The monthly literary magazine was unique in the sense that it was in the shape of a book. Our objective was to introduce the literature of other countries to the Oriya youth and bring about a consciousness about our era through that magazine. It was indeed a novel effort considering the time when it was published.

'*Sabuja Kabita*' was the first publication of the society. Seven or eight poems written by the five of us were included in the magazine. Its cover

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page had been printed in green. It had been dedicated to the young-at-heart. This kind of book had been published for the first time in Orissa. The novel 'Basanti', which had been published as a serial for a number of months in '*Utkal Sahitya*', was published by the society as a book. It had been appreciated by everyone. We had been amazed to discover that the book had been especially appreciated by young women. In due course, the novels, poetry collections and plays written by the members of our group had been published along with the creations of a few other likeminded young men. They included Harish Chandra Badal, Mayadhar Mansingh, Harihar Mishra, Sachi Routray, Kamala Kanta Das, etc. We had also published the novels 'Tu Mo Maa' and 'Sani Saptaha' written respectively by Dibyasingh Panigrahi and Chintamani Mohanty, older and more established authors than us. In order to create innovative literature, we located technically qualified people to write books on agriculture and cattle farming and published them. The Sabuja Sahitya Samiti operated in full swing for a period of seven years. Sarat was thereafter transferred to Bihar and a Bengali young man called Gopal Banerjee known to Sarat took over the management of the Samiti. Gradually, there was slackness in efforts and the Samiti was closed. Yugavina had a good circulation. Subscription fees arrived by money order even four to five years after its closure. I had to return them and write them back that Yugavina was closed for the time being. I had hoped that the publication of Yugavina would be revived some day even if publication of books by the Sabuja Sahitya Samiti had been stopped. That was not to be. It was one of my greatest regrets in life. Thirty books had been published by the Samiti. Many unsold books gathered dust for a long time after the closure of the Samiti. Efforts were made to sell those books through other booksellers. I would not know how successful such efforts were. As far as I know, Gopal Chatterjee left Cuttack for ever without rendering any accounts of the Samiti to either Baikuntha or Kalindi or me. He used to stay in the Kathagada Sahi residence of Sarat. The office of the Samiti was also located there.

Creation and circulation of appropriate literature to change the thinking of the people stopped after the closure of the Sabuja Sahitya Samiti. But we continued our efforts at a personal level. The foundation of our friendship had not been affected in any way because of the closure of the Samiti or Yugavina.

Many years later, in 1968, Bhikari Charan Dash, the proprietor of New Students Store, wanted to publish 'Sabuja Kabita' and 'Basanti'. We agreed to it. The five of us signed an agreement with Bhikari Babu who

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wrote out a cheque in favour of Sarat for four thousand rupees as consideration. The money remained with Sarat. It had been decided then to donate the amount to either Utkal University or *Utkal Sahitya Samaj* so that a prize called the Sabuja Sahitya Samiti Award would be given every year for literary essay competition with the interest earned on the amount. There were some hurdles in carrying this plan out. Hence, Annada, Kalindi and I collected four thousand rupees among ourselves and deposited the amount with the Utkal Sahitya Samaj. The award is being given every year from that time. Our condition is that young men and women less than thirty years of age can participate in the competition. A few of our juniors like Bhagabati Panigrahi, Ananta Patnaik, Baidyanath Rath and others formed a group in 1935–36 inspired by Marxian thought. Along with their political programmes, their activities also included creation of progressive literature. Our relations were close with the group, especially in the field of literature.

Another literary organisation called the *Prachi Samiti* was established at that time. I was the only one from our group who was involved with that organisation. Arta Ballav Mohanty and Laxmikant Choudhury, Sanskrit and Oriya professors of Ravenshaw College respectively, had a special love for ancient Oriya literature. Arta Babu was busy in collecting ancient, unpublished palm leave manuscripts in Oriya from 1921 with the help of Karunakar Kar and some other students. He had also initiated the work of bringing out a revised edition of the writings of Sarala Das and Jagannath Das. The Prachi Samiti had been formed to expedite this work. Arta Babu was the president and Bichhanda Charan Patnaik was the secretary. Laxmi Kanta Babu, I and a few others were members. I was also there in the Working Committee. The Sabuja Sahitya Samiti was followed by the Prachi Samiti. Bichhanda Charan Patnaik was a competent litterateur. We had been hearing his criticism of the Sabuja Sahitya Samiti for a long time. But he recognized quality in people. He contributed to the spread of Bhanja literature far and wide at a later stage. He was well conversant with ancient literature. Therefore, Arta Babu had relied on him and Karunakar Kar. A few others joined the Prachi Samiti. Bhaskar Chandra Mohapatra of Edatala, Bhadrakh had amassed a lot of wealth in ship loading and other businesses at Calcutta. He had built a few houses at Calcutta. He had a lot of property at his village too. He was a friend of Umacharan Das, deputy magistrate. On the advice of Uma Babu, he donated twenty thousand rupees to the Government Hospital at Bhadrakh and another twenty thousand rupees to the Prachi Samiti. The government decorated him with the title of '*Rai Bahadur*' for this generosity. The Prachi Samiti

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purchased a press and started publishing ancient literature with the help of the money received. The fame of the Samiti increased manifold. Arta Babu paid very little attention to the management of the organisation. He had left everything to Bichhanda. Several problems arose gradually and the Prachi Samiti was finally closed. When efforts were made to retrieve the situation, it was discovered that important papers of the Samiti had been burnt. Arta Babu did not make a post mortem. He preferred to keep quiet. The Sabuja Sahitya Samiti had closed down. Now the Prachi Samiti too followed suit. However, Arta Babu followed up on the work of Prachi all by himself till his death.

Bhagabati Panigrahi's group had also made a foray into these activities and started publishing books and magazines. They were highly educated, hardworking and political revolutionaries. As they were engrossed more and more in political activities, their literary activities slowed down. Their '*Nabayuga Sahitya Sansad*' closed down. But they had laid the foundation of the Communist Party in Orissa.

These three efforts in the literary field had taken place in the third, fourth and fifth decades of the twentieth century. They have deeply influenced Oriya literature. I am gratified that I contributed to each of these organisations in my own humble way.

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# Prosperity and Adversity

Practice of law is not a business. It's a profession. It is supposed to give legal advice to those who have been wronged and to establish justice in the society for the diminution. I had read this from the history of the legal profession. Vice Principal Sharif Saheb also used to say this repeatedly in the class in the law school. A thin bag stitched to the gowns of the lawyers hung from their backs. The lawyer never asked for fees for his services. Anyone who wanted to pay him put the money in that bag. This was the system followed in the ancient western civilisation. Courts were established in our country during the British period following the convention in the west and the profession of law started. A barrister or advocate had no direct relationship with his client in England. The solicitors collected all the papers and case details from the clients and passed them on to the barristers. The barrister fought the case in the court on the basis of these. The solicitors also collected the fees from the clients. What hypocrisy! The barrister won't ask for his fees! This system was in vogue in our country when High Courts were set up in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. High courts were also set up in other places. But the dual system did not last long.

I had seen barristers like Sir Ali Imam, Hasan Imam, Sir Sultan, P.K. Sen, K.B. Dutta, P.C. Manuk and others in the Patna High Court. They were my ideals. I had seen them conducting trials. That helped me a great deal when I became a lawyer myself. The few cases I had initially were mostly in the sub-judge or judge court. Hence, clients and court officials alike held me in some esteem. Another event occurred unexpectedly like the college commemoration. The office of the Brahmo Samaj was in front of my house. Raja Rammohan Ray had started the

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Brahmo Samaj on August 20, 1828. There were very few followers of Brahmo philosophy in Orissa. A few famous people like Biswanath Kar, Raghunath Rao, Dr. Jayant Rao and Dr. P.C. Ray of Cuttack belonged to this group. However, many others who did not subscribe to the Brahmo philosophy attended the functions organised by the Brahmo Samaj. A few of us also attended the functions during our college days. I also went there at times after I started practicing law. Raja Rammohan Ray was born on May 22, 1772. He died on September 27, 1833. His death centenary was being observed in several places including Calcutta in 1933. Biswanath Babu and others also organised it at Cuttack in a grand way. Meetings were held under a canopy three evenings in a row. Gyananjan Niyogi had come from Calcutta to deliver the lecture on the last evening. He was an eloquent speaker. He was the brother of Prof. Niranjan Niyogi. He grieved that people were no longer attracted towards religion as '*baadi, gaadi* and *chhadi*' (house, carriage and walking stick) were considered to be the signs of prosperity in the society. *Pucca* buildings, hackney carriages and walking sticks indicated social standing and aristocracy in Bengali society at the time. People walked holding a corner of their dhoti in the left hand and a walking stick in the right hand irrespective of their age. Ramanand Chatterjee, the extremely venerable and capable editor of 'Modern Review' and '*Pravasi*', had come as the patron of the centenary celebration. There were four speakers. Robert Sahib, the Principal of Stewart College, represented the Christians. One Yusuf represented the Muslims. Biswanath Kar spoke on behalf of the Brahmo Samaj and I spoke on behalf of the youth or the Hindus. Biswanath Babu had come to my house to invite me. I was the last speaker. I gave a short speech. I said that the religion that spread five years before the death of Rammohan was not different from Hinduism in any way except that it did not subscribe to idol worship. Hence, very few people in India had embraced the Brahmo religion in the last one hundred years. The new religion had not been able to capture the imagination of the people as the old religion had. I had quoted the number of people belonging to the Brahmo community from the census reports. The Brahmos present at the meeting did not like it one bit. The non-Brahmos appreciated my presentation. I had no intention of casting any aspersion on the Brahmos. I had only presented the facts. Ramanand Chatterjee countered my contention the next evening in his long speech. He also wrote about the controversy in his magazine when he went back to Calcutta mentioning my name in his article. He was a learned man. I was nothing compared to him. But little men got

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recognition sometimes when they brushed shoulders with great men. I got the adulations even though there were no justifications for that.

No one cared about my comments on the intelligence and creativity of Rammohan that I referred to in my speech. Everyone concentrated on my comments on the religion. Raja Rammohan Ray was a man in possession of extraordinary qualities. He had learnt Persian in Patna and Sanskrit at Varanasi. He had achieved proficiency in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Urdu, Hindi and English on his own efforts. He had established the Vedanta College in Calcutta in 1825. Lord Bentick had promulgated the Regulation No. 17 to ban the burning of the *sati* in 1829 because of Ray's constant efforts. An agitation had been started in favour of the burning of *sati*. Advocate General Sergeant Spanky Sahib was sent to London from Calcutta to file an appeal in the privy council against the Regulation promulgated by Lord Bentick. The appeal was heard by the privy council. Rammohan was in London at the time. He submitted an application to the privy council against the burning of *sati* signed by three hundred Indians. The privy council overruled the appeal. The act promulgated in 1835 for the revival of the freedom of press was also the result of his efforts. Rammohan had filed an appeal in the Supreme Court and another in the King Inn Council when the government closed down the publication of Calcutta Chronicle and banished James Silk Buckim, its editor, from India invoking Regulation 2 of 1823. The two appeals had been set aside. But they had been the forerunners of press freedom. Act 11 was passed in 1835 two years after his death to protect the freedom of the press. Indians were appointed in higher administrative positions because of his efforts. He had repeatedly demanded this before the Board of Control and the Parliament Select Committee. Regulation 11 was promulgated in 1833 to appoint Indians as Deputy Collectors. Indians were appointed as Deputy Magistrates by virtue of enactment of Regulation 15 in 1833. He demonstrated how to raise one's voice against the rulers lawfully. Unfortunately, no one paid any heed to all these things that I said in my speech. I was taken to task just because I had mentioned that the Brahmo faith had very few followers.

Freida Das, Sarangadhar Das's American wife, came at times to our house. Sarala Dei, pioneer of women's freedom in Orissa, also came. We sat on the well in the courtyard and chatted. We thought we could change the society in no time at all. Both were about my age. A gentleman walked inside my house one evening calling 'Piri, Piri' (Piri was the nickname of my wife at her father's home.). I did not know him. Ili (I called my wife

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'Ili') knew him. He was Choudhury Jagannath Dash, son of her father's younger brother, Jairam. He lived in Germany. He had studied Philosophy there. As he started on a trip to Switzerland, someone asked him if he had seen Darjeeling. He replied in the negative. The gentleman told him that there were many places to visit in India and, being an Indian, he should see those places first rather than take a trip through Switzerland. His visit stopped there and he decided to come and see Darjeeling. That was why he was in India. Jagannath was about my age. We chatted for a while. He invited me to his place in Germany when I visited the country years later. Unfortunately, he died soon after my visit.

Krushna Chandra was my younger brother. He passed matriculation in the First Division from Puri Zilla School in 1933 and came to Cuttack to study I.Sc. in Ravenshaw College. He stayed with me. He was intelligent and quiet. He took a bicycle to the college. He slept in the passage room at night. His friends included Ashok Das who became the Advocate General in later life, Gangadhar Mahapatra who became a minister in the Government of Orissa and Kabi Mahapatra who became a teacher. My youngest brother Sarat (Tinu) too soon came to live with us to study at the school. Father was a teacher in Puri Zilla School at the time. He stayed in a rented house belonging to Chintamani Kar in Heragohiri Street. I managed without much trouble with my family consisting of my two brothers, my wife and my two children, Baby (Prabhat) and Mini (Sumitra). There was a servant at home to help. I was hit by a bolt from the blue all of a sudden on May 21, 1934. It was summer. We had been sleeping on the verandah. Krushna was sleeping on a bed in the passage room. I heard someone falling in the morning with a thud. I found Krushna lying near the well, dead. Everyone got up when I shouted. It was five in the morning. It was still slightly dark. I went on the terrace and called Murali Babu, my neighbour, who was a doctor. He ran in with whatever he was wearing. He examined Krushna and said that he had passed away. I did not know what to do. Murali Babu asked me if someone was to be informed. He went himself and called Radhanath Babu (Rath). Radhanath Babu went to see Baidyanath Mishra, Senior Deputy Magistrate. He got a letter of permission from him for the cremation of the body. Murali Babu was concerned about this letter since he knew that Krushna had committed suicide after taking poison. I discovered two sealed envelopes from under his pillow after a while. One of the letters was addressed to me. The other was addressed to Ashok. He had written the following to me:

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21.05.1934

Respected Brother,

This is my last letter to you. I am committing suicide today. I do not know if you consider me to be stupid. But it's not that. I received such a call for the first time in my life. I am not mentioning any reason. I only got a call. All right, I'm leaving.

Please call Ganga Bhaina and the others tomorrow. Tell them that I have given up my life in response to some call. Tell the same thing to anyone else who asks.

Kindly return his books and watch to Ashok Bhaina. There are two copies of the magazine 'Sahakar' that belong to Kabi Prasad Mahapatra. Give those to him. Please send the letter meant for Ashok Bhaina to him. Send a wire to him tomorrow if possible. Just say 'Krushna dead. Letter follows'. Send a letter to him if you don't get any reply.

Convey my farewell to everyone. I did this at five in the morning with potassium cyanide.

Please try to ensure that my body is not sent for post mortem. Farewell! Take care of mother. I have given you a lot of work. Please forgive me.

Your servant,
Krushna

The body was cremated without a post mortem. I was thunderstruck. I do not know till today why Krushna did such a thing. I have not been able to imagine anything either. I gave Ashok his letter. I returned the books and the watch. I sent the magazines to Kabi. Fifty years have passed since. But I feel grief-stricken when I recall the incident even now.

Four months later, I was distressed by another event. The Old Boys' Association of Ravenshaw College had to elect a representative to the Senate of Patna University. My friend Sarat suggested that I should file nomination for the purpose. I asked Parija Saheb. He signed on the nomination paper as my proposer. Laxmidhar Mohanty, Member, Bihar-Orissa Legislative Council and Vice President filed his nomination later. It was natural that elderly people would support him. I was pained and

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amazed to know that Parija Saheb too voted in favour of him although he was my proposer. The vote was taken in the College Hall one evening. I was sitting quietly. The elderly people avidly canvassed for Laxmidhar Babu. Laxmidhar Babu himself had the gift of the gab. His presence increased the number of his supporters. I lost the election by a margin of thirty two votes. Laxmidhar Babu had written me a letter from Ranchi on 12.09.1934 before the voting took place.

12.09.1934

Council Quarters,
Doranda,
P.O. Hinoo, Ranchi

My dear Harihar,

I am so very sorry that in the coming election for Senate, I am to contest with you. It is irony of fate that I am destined to do this with the best of my friends. This is my misfortune and I take it that it is one of these misfortunes into which God has put me now. To tell you the truth, I had not the least inclination to stand and it is to the wishes of some of my friends that I had to yield at last. I had to recognize that their arguments were sound and so had to yield.

I wanted to write to you earlier but I was so nervous to write to you. In fact I admit that I ought to help you in matters like these instead of contesting with you. But as I said above this is an irony of fate. When I reach Cuttack I shall meet you. It is from many considerations that I decided to stand and if you could find your way to desist this time, I promise I would help you with all my energies to get you elected in future. But you are young and have entertained an ambition and I am therefore nervous to tell you this. There should be no bitterness and the same good relation that exists between us should continue.

Yours affectionately,
Laxmidhar

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Along with these adversities, some success also came my way. I got a chance to go to Athgarh to conduct a case. It was quite unexpected for an inexperienced lawyer like me to go out of Cuttack for a case. I received my first fifty rupee fee for it. It was a minor case. But there were many spectators in the court to see the lawyer from Cuttack. It was in the court of Dibyasingh Mishra, magistrate. He was somewhat embarrassed when I stood up and addressed him as 'Your Honour'. I have gone to different courts in Athgarh later in connection with several other cases. I have also attended the court of the political agent there. An appeal was to be heard once in the court of a European political agent. I had carried several books with me to cite precedents. The Sahib came to the court and asked me why I had carried so many books. I said that I had brought them to exihibit them in the court. He asked me again whether I was going to quote from all those books. I answered in the affirmative. The Sahib did not bother to hear anything and wrote in the file that the appeal was granted. I did not have to sweat in the least. I pointed out certain mistakes in the files of the lower court in another case. The Sahib called the judge of the lower court and asked him to rectify the mistakes. I objected that it could not be done. There were arguments. Finally, he understood that he would have more problems than the lower court if his directions were carried out.

Dr. Satyabadi Mishra was the Health Officer of Cuttack municipality. An honest young man worked as an overseer in the municipality. Satyabadi Babu liked him very much. He had brought a second hand (may be third hand) Baby Austin Turor car for him from Calcutta for seven hundred fifty rupees. The overseer did not have the money to buy it. One Sunday morning Satyabadi Babu arrived at my house in the car as I was about to have my bath. He talked about the car in course of our conversation. I asked him to wait for a while and came inside the house. I went back and handed over a cheque for five hundred rupees to him saying that I would buy the car. I promised to pay the balance later. Satyabadi Babu taught me how to drive. The car was mine. I never thought at that point in time that I would own a car so soon. Only Janakinath Bose, Subodh Chandra Chatterjee, Birakishore Ray and Chintamani Acharya among the lawyers had a car at that time. It was natural that everyone would be amazed to see a non-entity like me driving a car beside such luminaries. Chintamani Babu could not believe that I had bought a car when I drove it to the court for the first time. Who could believe that a lawyer with only three years of practice could own a car? I was amazed myself. Everything was possible because of God. It was all due to His blessing.

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I took my family to Ranchi for a holiday for three weeks during the Puja holidays. A few people made fun of me about it for a few days. I had a chat with Baishnab Charan Das, deputy superintendent of police, at Ranchi on the *Dussehra* day. He was a self-indulging person. He loved literature and good food. Sub-Deputy Damodar Mardaraj was staying with him as a guest at the time. His father Braja Sundar Mardaraj had retired as a sub-deputy. He had applied for insolvency in the court of the District Judge in order to save himself from moneylenders. For some reason he had appointed me as his lawyer. He had neither paid any fees nor had I asked him for any. I had no idea how he relied upon a lawyer with three years of experience in such an important case. The court ordered that he had to deposit ₹ 25/- a month in the court towards all his loans. Five years later, a problem arose in connection with this case. He used to send ₹ 25/- to me every month and I deposited it in court. He had sent the money once to me but it could not be deposited. There were a few lawyers who envied me. Some of them told him that his insolvency would be annulled because of this lapse and the moneylenders would get a decree against him resulting in his incarceration. Mardaraj was scared. In order to save his skin, he took the advice of these lawyers and went one morning to the bungalow of Bayers Sahib, the district judge, an application in hand. The judge sahib was repairing his car. He asked Mardaraj to meet him in the court. I found Mardaraj standing in court when I went there. He pretended not to have seen me and returned home. He came to my house in the evening to narrate everything and apologized. He had found out that the dues of two months had already been deposited in the court.

All of us enjoyed the holidays at Ranchi. The children loved to wander around on the lonely roads and see the Hunduru Falls. My third child Basanta was born by that time. He was quite young. One day Mini was lost when she was out on her own. We found her after some time. We went on holidays each year thereafter. It was not always to a distant place. Sometimes, we spent our holidays in Puri or Bhubaneswar.

We stayed three years in that thatched house. In 1953, we moved to Jadunath Bhavan at the entrance to Oriya Bazar. We were in that house when I was working in the income tax office. We had taken the entire upper storey on rent at that time. Later the building was divided between two brothers who were the owners of the property. Each brother had two rooms on the ground floor and two rooms in the first floor. We took one part of the house at a monthly rent of ₹ 30/-. We stayed there for two years.

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I bought a large cupboard for books after I moved to that house. I purchased the extremely costly Empire Digest and Halsobury Series from the Butterworth Company in Calcutta on instalment basis. No one in Cuttack had these books. The Empire Digest was not even available in the court library. Many people said that it was an unnecessary expenditure. But I was happy to be in possession of the books. Opposing counsels faced problems when I found precedents from those books and presented them in court. The judges looked upon me favourably too.

Baby and Mini were studying in the Convent School. Basant was yet to go to school. Anu (Ananta) was younger than him. My wife became ill. She had hysteria earlier but she was all right after coming to Cuttack. She suffered from weakness and liver disorder. Reverend Feloz was the Superintendent of the Mission Press. His wife had studied medicine in England. She was kind-hearted and sweet. My wife was under her treatment. Basant always tagged along with his mother. He loved cardamoms. Mrs. Feloz always carried cardamoms with her for Basant when she came to see the patient every morning. She talked to Basant before examining the patient. She prescribed less medicine and provided more reassurances. Mrs. Feloz started for England by the time my wife recovered from her illness. She was expecting her child. She knew the responsibilities of a doctor very well. Before she left for England, she brought Dr. David Robin Sahu to our house to introduce him to the patient and explain her illness. David took up the responsibilities after she left. I knew David from my Patna days. He was studying in the Medical College there. We were about the same age. He was Christian. He had a medicine shop in Buxi Bazar called Rita Medicine Store. He joined government service later and retired as the Director. My youngest son Ananta married his second daughter Sanjukta in 1964.

I had been to Darjeeling in the *Puja* vacation of 1936. It was not possible to enter into Darjeeling without submitting one's photograph and getting a written permission from the collector. I got the permission after stating my reasons to visit Darjeeling and assuring the authorities that I had the financial strength to take care of myself during my stay there. That was perhaps the first time a photograph of me alone was taken. It was wonderful to enjoy the Himalayas from the Mall Road every morning and evening. I haven't forgotten yet the way I had been embarrassed while going to see the sunrise at the Tiger Hills. It was still quite dark in the morning when I left the hotel to walk the hilly road to the Tiger Hills. Around twenty five people had already gathered by the time I reached the Tiger Hills. Everyone was eager to see the sun rising on the horizon. I had

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been staring towards the east. A Japanese couple was there. The wife said something softly to the husband. I could hear her speak. But I could not understand anything as she was talking in Japanese. The husband patted me softly on the back. He said in broken English, "Why are you looking towards the east? Look to the west." Everyone except me was looking towards the west. I wondered if the sun rose in the west there. Gradually, the snow-laden western hills turned crimson. It was the reflection of the sunrise in the east. If the Japanese woman would not have warned me through her husband at the right time, I would have been deprived to see that wonderful scenery. The sunrise was not seen on the Tiger Hills every morning. The sky is covered with clouds or fog on most days. Many people miss it after going there several times. I was lucky to see it on my first visit.

B.K. Ray was the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling. He was the brother of N.K. Ray, Deputy Registrar, Orissa Cooperative Society. I knew him intimately. He had informed his brother about my visit. B.K.Ray and his wife were nice to me. I got acquainted with Azizul Haq, a minister of Bengal and the government pleader of Burdwan. The government pleader forced me to stitch an overcoat there. The coat is still there after fifty years. My sons or son-in-law use it at times. I recall my first visit to Darjeeling when I see it. I have gone to Darjeeling several times after that; but it was not the same Darjeeling. I had brought a walking stick from Darjeeling and presented it to Chakradhar Mishra, my friend. He still has that stick and often reminisces about those days. I had once accompanied him to Shillong in Assam before my trip to Darjeeling. It was an unforgettable experience. The Raja of Keonjhar had gone there on a holiday. Chakradhar Babu needed permission from him to drive his car. We had gone there to submit his application and request him for the purpose. We met the young rajas of Balangir Patna and Nayagarh there. Both of them had heard of me. They were extremely courteous in their behaviour. The Raja of Nayagarh presented a pitiable picture of himself once. His queen was a Nepalese girl. She walked around the Shillong Club on her own. The Raja of Nayagarh ran after her with files in hand. It was obvious to see that he begged for some mercy from her. We had gone to Cherapunji from Shillong. Cherapunji is the place which has the highest rainfall in the world. The scenery there was fabulous. The clouds were helplessly locked between two mountain ranges. A local old woman gave us *gur* tea in a leaf bowl there. It was not tea. It was as good as nectar. A few such scenes have been etched in memory.

I used to go to Puri, Berhampur and Khurda in connection with my clients' cases while I was at *Jadunath Bhavan*. The durbar of the separate

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province of Orissa was held on the 1st April, 1936. Sir John Hubback took oath as the Governor. We achieved some success in our efforts made through the Utkal Sammilani and other organizations for the unification of the Oriya speaking areas. We were hopeful for a separate administration for the state in the future according to the Government of India Act, 1935. Before the Congress decided to take part in the elections, the Raja of Paralakhemundi sent Mandhata Gorachand Patnaik, his trusted lawyer, to Cuttack to form the Nationalist Party with the help of Birakishore Ray. He selected me to contest the elections from the Puri Sadar seat. I was hesitant as I was afraid it might interfere with my law practice. But I agreed since Bira Babu and a few other lawyers were also candidates in the elections. The Congress decided to contest the elections and form the ministry. Jagannath Mishra of Markanda Sahi, Puri was the candidate of Congress from the Puri Sadar seat. He wrote me a letter as follows.

22.09.1936
Markanda Sahi,
Puri

Dear Harihar Babu

I heard from Acharya Harihar that you are going to contest from the North Puri area that includes Satyabadi, Delang, Pipili, Balianta and Balipatana police stations. I do not want to come in your way to contest the elections. But I envisage that there would be some problems for both of us if you decide to contest and hence I am writing this letter. I would never have stood as a candidate had you made your mind up in this regard a bit earlier. I believe you know that Lokanath Babu (Rai Bahadur) stood as a candidate from South Puri area and I did not contest the elections from that seat because of his eagerness to contest even though I am confident of getting more votes than him. If both of us would have contested, each of us would have been forced to spend around five thousand rupees. Apart from that, my people would have slandered him and his people would have done the same to me. All these will be extremely unpleasant. If both you and I become candidates from North Puri, the same thing will happen to both of us. I would not have bothered to write this letter if someone else would have been the candidate. This will be

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like a fight in the family. I would not have appointed agents and started campaigning in different places if I had known of your decision earlier. I would have withdrawn my candidature. I had heard about Lingaraj Babu. Hence, I had requested him even though my friends had dissuaded me from doing so. I went ahead only when he refused to listen to me. I would have made way for you if I had only known that you were planning to be a candidate. On the other hand, the Acharya had told me a few days back that you were not going to contest the elections.

In view of all these, I would feel reassured if you let me know your view on this matter. There is no time to lose at the present juncture. Hence, I request you to send a quick reply.

I hope you are fine. We are all fine here. Shankar might go to Calcutta with his family soon for a holiday.

Yours truly,
Sri Jagannath Mishra

I read the letter a number of times. Jagannath Mishra was a near relative. He was rich and did not have to pursue a profession even though he had enrolled as a lawyer. I decided to withdraw my candidature. I informed him about my decision by return of post. His reply reached me.

02/01/37
Markanda Sahi,
Puri

Dear Harihar Babu,

I cannot find the appropriate language to convey my gratitude. I became so emotional on reading your letter that my eyes turned moist. I controlled myself with a great deal of effort. The contents of your letter bound me in a strong bond with you. I was overwhelmed to think about your sacrifice. I felt somewhat ashamed of myself too at the time. I pondered over a lot of things. Finally, I kept myself busy in other things to divert my mind.

Anyway, I felt reassured as Jagat was gradually displaying all his wickedness before me. Your supporters agreed to support me when I requested them even though they were not morally bound

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to do so. I believed these people would indulge in their wickedness to create problem either for me or for Mahapatra. Several nasty occurrences like these had been making me restless and anxious. However, all my anxieties have been laid to rest because of your letter.

I hope God would give me enough strength so I can repay your debt some day. The rest is fine.

Yours truly,
Shri Jagannath Mishra

That put an end to my electoral aspirations. Jagannath Babu won and became Parliamentary Secretary in the ministry formed by Biswanath Das.

I had been elected that year as the President of the All Orissa Students Conference (Chhatra Sammilani) held in the ground of Cuttack Town Hall. I had been punished for raising funds for the Chhatra Sammilani while studying at the Chaibasa School. I had been the secretary of the Sammilani while studying B.A. at Ravenshaw College. The government was angry with me as I had invited Pandit Godavarish Mishra as the president. Perhaps I got elected as the president of the Sammilani to compensate for all these sufferings. My presidential address was in English. It was the generosity of both the young and elderly people that I was accepted by everyone. I had been amazed to see a few elderly lawyers and high-ranking officers present at the Sammilani that day. The conference continued for two days without any problem. The young men belonging to the Communist Party were happy as I had given them the chance to express their views.

I remember another event that occurred at this time in which I was involved. Godavarish Babu stayed in my house whenever he came to Cuttack. He stayed in the passage room when I lived in the thatched house. He stayed in the drawing room after I moved to the Jadunath Bhavan. He did not have to stay in my house after I left Jadunath Bhavan as he had his own house at Cuttack by that time. Sudarshan Panigrahi had been staying with him for a long time. He used to go with him to different places when Godavarish Babu was a member of the Bihar-Orissa Legislative Assembly. Sudarshan Babu had a bigger say in the family than Godavarish Babu. His marriage had taken place while he lived in the house of Godavarish Babu. Sudarshan Babu managed the entire household of Godavarish Babu. Godavarish Babu's eldest daughter Taramani's

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marriage was solemnised with Biswambhar Praharaj, the zemindar of Bellia Bedha in Midnapore, with a great deal of pomp in 1928. I had seen Sudarshan Babu sitting on his verandah with a box and managing everything relating to the marriage. Times change. There were differences of opinion between them. Sudarshan Babu went around maligning Godavarish Babu everywhere. He looked for an opportunity to harm him in some way. People in politics always waited for such opportunities. There were enough people around to instigate Sudarshan Babu. One afternoon, Radhanath Babu (The Samaj) and I tried to bring about a compromise between the two in my house. Radhanath Babu started wailing. I tried to find the reason of the discord between them. All friendship and affection came to an end when people were suspicious of each other. We talked for about three to four hours. Finally, it was decided that Sudarshan Babu would be paid one thousand rupees and he would stay on his own. Further, we made him promise that he would not henceforth slander Godavarish Babu. One evening Radhanath Babu, Godavarish Babu and I went in a car to Banpur to pay one thousand rupees to Sudarshan Babu. It was difficult for Godavarish Babu to manage his affairs on his own. He was always dependent on an attendant. Sudarshan Babu had acted as a crutch for him for fourteen years. The burden fell on Gopinath after Sudarshan Babu left his side. Gopinath also had to do the cooking.

My landlord asked me to vacate the house towards the end of 1936. Incidentally, the last phase of a very old case relating to the partition of the Bhingarpur common estate was in progress at the time in the sub-judge court. I was a lawyer in that case along with a few others. Ramesh Chandra Mitra was the sub-judge. The common estate had a leased land measuring five gunths that belonged to the government at the Chandni Chowk square. The lease period was over. The land would be confiscated if a fresh lease was not granted. The sub-judge knew that I needed a rented house as a few of his houses in Cuttack had been let out. He called me to his chamber and told me that I could take that land from the government. I would be required to pay a small sum of money towards registration fee. I agreed without giving it any thought. I thought the land had dropped into my lap out of thin air. The sub-judge made all the arrangements with the consent of all the parties in the court. The *puja* to start construction of the house was performed on the land on January 1, 1937. The small, ancient house standing on the land was demolished.

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# New House and Fresh Problems

I had to concentrate on building the house as the landlord increased pressure on me to vacate his house. Udayanath Rath, deputy magistrate, had just finished construction of his double-storied house near the Sunshine Field. We met accidentally and chatted of various things. He sent Mahan, the mason who had constructed his house, to me. Mahan lived in Dagarpara which was close to Chandni Chowk. He was engaged by me for the construction of the house. He was an honest and capable mason. Those days, a male labourer was paid three annas a day while a female labourer was paid two annas. A young boy was paid four paise. The work went on day and night. I was told one day upon returning from the court that two persons had come during the day time to measure the land. Two days later, I received a notice from the Municipality that I was not to construct anything on the eastern half of the land.

Rami (Ramachandra Mishra) was my classmate in school. He worked as a clerk but he behaved like a big shot. He was extremely affectionate. He stayed with his widowed mother in a rented house in Pension Lane. He belonged to Bira Pratappur in Puri district. He was the nephew of Rai Bahadur Baidyanath Mishra. He was unmarried. He wanted to marry. My wife's uncle's daughter had been widowed at a young age. Her father had expired but she lived with her brother and mother in Bhingarpur. It was proposed that Rami would marry the girl. Widow marriage was unthinkable in the Choudhury clan. But the girl's brothers and Laxman

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Mishra, their brother-in-law (a police sub-inspector who retired as the superintendent of police and later acquired proficiency and fame as an ayurvedic doctor), wanted to go ahead with the marriage. Braja (Braja Sundar Dash Choudhury, the elder brother of the girl) asked for my opinion and I said that they should solemnize the marriage without any reservations. I knew Rami from my childhood. He was honest and affectionate. His only fault was that he was hot-tempered. He belonged to the same village as Laxman Mishra. The marriage was settled. I do not know what Braja told Rami later on. But, to my misfortune, Rami had the impression that I had spoken against him in order to break the negotiations. Oh dear! Oh dear! I was eager that the widowed girl should be somehow rehabilitated and Rami should set up his home. Rami did not ask me anything either. I had not been invited to the marriage. Yet I went there. He did not talk to me. He came after me from that day onward. He instigated Sachi, younger brother of Braja, to appeal to the municipalty that the land at Chandni Chowk belonged to the common estate where he had a share as a part-owner. Hence, the permission given by the municipality to construct a house there without his knowledge should be rescinded. He further appealed that construction should at least be immediately stopped in the eastern half of the land. Rami caught hold of a clerk in the municipality office and got an order issued to that effect. I was terribly hurt by Rami's manouevrings. Luckily, as per the approved drawing, only a small verandah, the portico and a small house were to be constructed in the eastern half. The construction of the house continued in the rest of the area. The ground floor was completed in just five months. The puja was performed by Pandit Baman Acharya with *mahaprasad* brought from Puri and we moved in on May 22, 1937. Father and mother had come. Many famous people like Parija Saheb, Brajasundar Das (editor of 'Mukur'), Rai Saheb Umacharan Das, Bichitrananda Das, Satyanarayan Sengupta, Prof. Bipin Bihari Ray and others had attended the function. My friends too had turned up. Rami did not come even though I had invited him.

The municipality case was decided in a few days. It was established that there was no justification for the order of restraint issued by the municipality. I constructed the verandah and the portico thereafter. Thirty eight thousand rupees had been spent to construct the ground floor. That I could arrange so much of money in my law practice of five years should have set tongues wagging. It did. People praised me on my face and criticized me behind me. I heard everything. I had borrowed twelve thousand rupees from Subba Rao, the lawyer, and one thousand rupees

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from Parija Saheb. I also owed money to the suppliers of construction materials. I paid these off in due course of time. I had to pay an interest of twelve rupees to Subba Rao. Damodar Mahapatra, elder brother of my father, came to Cuttack one day and took me to task for having borrowed so much money from Subba Rao. He might have heard from someone that Subba Rao had been disparaging me.

The house had two special features. The roof of the house was the first of its kind in Cuttack. Bhagabat Mohanty passed B.E. from Patna Engineering College and, instead of taking up a government job, decided to go into civil construction business along with his classmate Samuel. On his advice, a concrete roof was built for the house. Earlier, in 1921, only the new building of Ravenshaw College near the railway station had a brick reinforcement roof built by the Martin Burn Company of Calcutta. No other government or private building had a concrete roof. People used to come to my house at that time to see how the roof could be built without the support of heavy wooden bars. A mason fell from the top while the roofing of the verandah was in progress. We were all scared out of our wits. However, he recovered quite soon. Satish Banerjee, the deputy superintendent of police, came to enquire about the matter. He was happy to see the new house. He complimented me about everything and advised to go for septic tank latrine. He gave me the address of masons in Calcutta who could put it in place. I used to go to Patna High Court in connection with cases every so often via Calcutta. I got the mason and sanitary fittings from Calcutta and the toilets were fitted with sanitary latrines and basins. A tubewell was dug in the courtyard and a pump brought from A.T. Ali Hussain of Strand Road, Calcutta was fitted to provide water to the toilets. There was no provision for water supply to homes in Cuttack at that time. The mason from Calcutta also did the same work for Dr. Jayant Rao and Satish Banerjee later. Our house was the first in Cuttack to have concrete roof and modern sanitary fittings. All this came about effortlessly.

Rami had created hurdles in the construction of the house. He did not come to attend the housewarming puja. He was my friend. He became a relative when he married the daughter of my wife's uncle. But he kept his distance from me. A few years later, he stood outside my house one evening and sent for me. I found him standing there in a depressed mood. He told me that he was in trouble and he needed one thousand rupees immediately. He had tried elsewhere but had failed. I called him inside and served him with refreshments. I gave him the money and dropped him back in my car. For some reason, he still had retained his faith on me. I had been grieved later at his untimely demise. Two bound notebooks given by

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him still remind me of him. He had written a few lines expressing his affection for me when I was suffering from cholera. I read those at times just to reassure myself.

That was not the end of the problem with the house. A few months after we moved in, Chief Secretary Mansfield Sahib arrived at our place on a bicycle on a Sunday afternoon. After the exchange of pleasantries, he asked me if I would rent the house to the government. I was amazed. The Lalbagh compound of the Governor was adjacent to the compound of my house. Mansfield Sahib said that he would fix a gate on the boundary wall of the two houses if I let out the house for the occupation of the Governor's secretary. I told him that I would consult my wife and get back to him. For a while I thought that it would be easier for me to repay the amounts borrowed in connection with the construction of the house if I let out the house for some time. But my wife was unwilling to move into a rented house leaving her own. I informed Mansfield accordingly. A few days later, I was told that a few people had been coming in the afternoons to take measurements of the house. On enquiry, I discovered that the government was considering requisition of my house. I was worried. But there was no way out. About a month later, a letter came from the Lady Governor that she wanted to come to my house to chat with my wife. My wife had gone out of Cuttack the day before for a few days. I thought that if I said that to the Lady Governor, she would think that the Oriya woman was scared to meet her. So I wrote her back thanking her for her letter and invited her. The letter was duly delivered to her by her peon. I sent a messenger to my wife asking her to come back immediately. She arrived the next morning. Lady Hubback came at 5 P.M. along with Nirmalbala Nayak. My wife and I talked to her for some time. We had snacks and tea. All women were alike irrespective of their colour. They exchanged *tidbits* and talked about the children. Lady Hubback went around my house happily. As she was about to leave, I told her that my wife was sad that she had to leave the house. She asked for the reason. I told her about Mansfield and the requisitioning of the house. She felt sad about it and told my wife that it was highly unfair. She also reassured her that she would talk to her husband about it. A few days later, the Governor, Mansfield and others were present at a meeting at the Nari Sangha Sadan. I was present too. As Sir John Hubback came down from the dais after the meeting, he saw me and asked, "Is Mrs. Mahapatra happy now?" He gave a sly smile. I smiled back. He did not expect any answer nor did I give one. Mansfield came to me after that and asked, "How could His Excellency get interested in your house?" I smiled at him and said, "You were also

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interested in that." Both of us laughed. It was just the blessing of God that such a thing happened. It was unthinkable that the Lady Governor would desire to visit people like us. Why would the Governor be interested in countermanding the proposal of the Chief Secretary? Hubback was always courteous whenever we met on later occasions. I had written him a letter about one of his lectures. He had written back the following.

5th August, 1939
Government House,
Puri

Dear Mr. Mahapatra,

I must write to thank you for your very kind letter about my speech. It is great satisfaction to me to know that I managed to express what I believed to be the feelings of the people of Orissa as a whole with some degree of success.

Yours sincerely,

John Hubback

Harihar Mahapatra, Esq.,
Chandnichowk,
Cuttack

Gradually, the upper storey of the house was constructed. The small, open space was converted into a garden. We have been winning prizes for the garden in local competitions. The first gardener was a follower of *Alekha Dharma*. Bata came next. He was a pastmaster at bluffing. He would sulk if he was not sent to the market to do the shopping. But everyone relied on him. He has stayed with us for thirty years. He has become a part of the family.

I knew Rajendranarayan Bhanja Deo, the Raja of Kanika, from my college days. He was favourably disposed towards me from the beginning of our acquaintance. He had asked me to handle the election case of his *Tikayat* (eldest son) as also a few other cases. He arrived in his car in front

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of my house at about ten in the morning one day, almost a year after the completion of the construction of my house. I was amazed to see him. He was not the kind of person who visited inconsequential people like me. He came inside and said, "Shailendranarayan (the *Tikayat*) was saying that you have constructed a beautiful house. I've come to take a look." I blushed. He went around all the rooms. There was a fountain on one side of the courtyard. He operated the fountain. Finally, he came to the office room. He said, "This is the only room that earns money. All the others use up the money." It was absolutely true. That statement made his visit so memorable. He had come to the Lalbagh Palace that day to the Governor. My house was on the way back. He was kind enough to drop in.

Panu Pradhan's thatched house was in front of my house across the road. Panu came to sell the house and the one *gunth* land to me when the land was about to be auctioned off. We bought it from him. But it was agreed that Panu would stay there as long as he lived. He lived all by himself. He was often beset with illness and poverty. He had his meals once a day in our house. He passed away after three years. His house was in ruins by that time. Another gunth of vacant land was there adjacent to Panu's land. It was a government leased land that belonged to Kailash Lenka, a lawyer. He took an advance of two hundred rupees from me to sell it to me. But, he sold it to Rukmini Dei, wife of Bhubanananda Das (B. Das), for three hundred rupees later. Rukmini Dei sold it to us for ten thousand rupees in 1961. Laxman Swain of Dagarpada filed a case against us for acquiring the land of Panu Pradhan. He was the municipal commissioner at the time. He finally lost the case. Two stalwarts, Satyanarayan Sengupta and Laxmidhar Mohanty, were fighting the case on his behalf. I was the lawyer for myself. Having lost the case, he got the municipality to file a case against me that I was building a house on the land without authorisation. Panu Pradhan's thatch had caved in. The walls were in a dilapidated condition. We repaired all those and covered the thatch with a tin roof. The permission of the municipality was not necessary for that. Laxman Swain also lost that case. In this manner, we had to cross several hurdles in acquiring the three pieces of land.

I was instrumental in building another house. It was not my own house. It was decided to buy a plot of land and build a house for the *Samaj* Press at the time of the visit of Purushottam Das Tandon towards the end of 1933. It was proposed that the house would be named Gopabandhu Bhavan in memory of Pandit Gopabandhu Dash. The Gopabandhu Memorial Committee was formed. Acharya Harihar Dash was the

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president and I was the secretary of the Committee. Donations were collected for the purpose. Application was made for a piece of government land near the Buxibazar Market. R.P. Ward was the Collector at the time. He was a liberal at heart. He agreed to provide the land at a nominal lease rental of one rupee per year. The permission of the Revenue Commissioner was needed for the purpose. I brought that permission. Biswanath Dash was the Chief Minister at the time. He laid the foundation stone for the building. The Assembly was in session at the time. Mukunda Prasad Das, the Speaker, other ministers and members of the legislature had attended the function. The Acharya and Pandit Lingaraj Mishra had visited the kings of the princely kingdoms at the time seeking donations. I had accompanied them to the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj. Dibyasingh Panigrahy was the government lawyer for the state. We stayed in his house. Dewan K.C.Niyogi was unwilling to help us. We met the Maharaja and he helped us without any reservation. The house was built by a contractor. That was the beginning of the Gopabandhu Bhavan. Of course, it has increased considerably in size later on.

Mother wanted me to build a house in the village. I built that after the construction of my house at Cuttack was completed. It was a *pucca* house. Mahana, the mason, had built that house in the village too. Thirty two thousand rupees had been spent in the construction of the house. My parents were happy about a house in the village. But they did not stay there for long. They went to Puri and lived there after I had a house there.

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# A Different Turn

Law classes were held in Ravenshaw College during the morning hours. There was one professor. Two experienced advocates were engaged as part-time lecturers for a period of three years. Chintamani Acharya was one such lecturer. The monthly salary was only one hundred and fifty rupees. But the teachers were held in high esteem among the lawyers and outside. There was one Public Service Commission for Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The lecturers were appointed by the Commission. Permanent lecturers in government colleges were being appointed at a salary of one hundred and fifty rupees per month at the time. The lecturers of law taught for two hours in the mornings. I was appointed as a lecturer in 1938. The timetable was prepared in such a manner that I had classes only on four days. I had no classes on Fridays and Saturdays. I went out of headquarters on those days to attend to cases in courts outside Cuttack. I availed leave if I had to go to Patna. Parija Saheb was the Principal of Ravenshaw College. Tripathy Saheb was the D.P.I. They never considered me to be their subordinate. I was appointed for another three years after my first term was over. Madhusudan Mahanty, the editor of the Observer, an English magazine, wrote me the following when I was appointed as a lecturer for the first time.

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27-7-1938
Chandnichowk, Cuttack

My dear Mr. Mahapatra,

Hearty congratulations on your well deserved appointment. May not 'The Observer' expect a share on the happy occasion? Any little would be highly appreciated.

Wishing you all luck.

Sincerely,
M.S. Mahanty

H. Mahapatra
Advocate

Another letter reached me at the time. It was from Minudi (Malati Choudhury) on 1.8.38.

Hari Bhai,

I am sorry we could not meet when you were here last. In fact, I wanted to meet you urgently. I had waited for you throughout the day. Forget it. I am going to a village in Madhupur very early in the morning tomorrow. We have a camp there starting tomorrow. Naba Babu too is accompanying me. I hope to get a hefty donation from you for the 'Krushaka' newspaper. I have been trying to go to your house to meet you for the purpose. But I have not been able to do so yet. You have joined as a lecturer in Law. Don't we have a share in the spoils? You must know that 'Krushaka' is going through a lot of financial problems. I hope to get at least fifty rupees from you this week. I would be a great deal relieved if you let me know through the bearer of the letter when I can get the money. Otherwise, I would be worrying all the fifteen days that I have to spend in the camp.

Yours affectionately,

Minudi

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I had been spending money in this manner from my meager earnings right from the beginning. Madhu Babu was an income tax officer. We were close to each other since the day I had joined as an inspector in the department till his demise. He resigned from his job sometime later because of certain problems. He studied law and became a lawyer. He had published 'The Observer' for a long time. He was an intrepid and resolute person. I had been helping him as far as my finances permitted me to do so. He was justified in asking for more when my earnings increased.

"Krushaka" was the mouthpiece of the younger group in congress. I was associated with the newspaper. All work related to public life faced a fund crunch. It was especially so with the publication of a newspaper. No advertisements were available at the time. Minudi and others were unabashed in seeking financial help. I was equally eager to help. It was natural that the number of such organizations seeking help would increase over time. I was happy to help them any way I could. I had heard in my childhood in the village that a well did not dry up if you took water out of it. The water did not increase either if you did not take out any.

A conference of the Gandhi Seva Sangh was held for seven days at Berboi near Delanga in Puri. It had begun on March 25, 1938. Gandhiji and other prominent leaders had come from all parts of the country. Radhanath Babu (*The Samaj*) and I had carried bouquets from Cuttack for Gandhiji. It was extremely difficult for Gopabandhu Choudhury to help Gandhiji alight from the train because of the crowd. In the process, the bouquet carried by me fell from my hand and was crushed by the crowd. My hand too was sprained. The discipline with which the conference was conducted and the unostentatious arrangements made for a huge gathering were to be seen to be believed. Kasturba had been publicly reprimanded by Gandhiji for having gone to Puri to have a *darshan* of Lord Jagannath during that conference. Gandhiji did not want her to go to a temple where the Harijans were prohibited from entering. I had heard that Gandhiji had not talked to her for several days after the incident. Such things took place in every family although not for similar reasons. I had also heard that Nityananda Babu (Nityananda Kanungo, minister) used to clean toilets there at the time. Gandhiji was the symbol of service to mankind and sacrifice. His influence over other people could be gauged from this event.

The sacred thread ceremony of my eldest son Baby (Prabhat) was held in the village. His first birthday had also been celebrated there. I was an income tax inspector at that time. It was much better than the ordinary

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function held in villages. Some people agreed to go from Cuttack on my request for the sacred thread ceremony. Parija Saheb's wife and daughters, Tripathy Saheb's wife, Birakishore Ray, Chintamani Acharya, Satish Chandra Basu, Subba Rao, Rabindranath Sinha, Haricharan Mukherjee, Souriprasad Mohapatra, Haridas Sen, Dinabandhu Sahu, Gadadhar Jena, Chakradhar Mishra, Pandit Lingaraj Mishra, Dibyasingh Mishra, Kanhucharan Mishra, Satyabadi Mishra and others arrived in the mofussil village. Gopa Uncle, Shankar (my brother-in-law) and others came from Puri. Biswanath Dash was the Chief Minister at the time. He was addressed as the Prime Minister. He could not make it to the function. But he had sent a pair of Berhampuri silk dhotis for the *brahmachari*. The village people were naturally excited to see such a galaxy of distinguished people from outside. Some invitees found it a new experience to sit on the village road under a canopy of dried coconut branches to have their lunch. Bira Babu praised the food cooked at the village for a long time. Chintamani Babu teased Baby so much at the time of piercing of the ear lobe that he left the place with only one of his lobes pierced. He wore the sacred thread with just the one lobe pierced. Separate arrangements were made for the people who had come from outside. They were given lunch ahead of the others and bid farewell. Then the feast for the villagers was supposed to begin. Water was sprinkled on the dusty road of the village and palm leaf mats were placed. The brahmins of the village were invited once, and then a second time. That was the custom. My father-in-law Choudhury Narahari Dash had come for the sacred thread ceremony of his grandson. He came outside to sit for lunch. There were wicked people everywhere. A few discussed it among themselves that it would not be proper for them to sit at the same place to eat where the Choudhury of Bhingarpur also sat. The reason was that the Choudhury of Bhingarpur was not the same high caste brahmin as the samantas of the village. The food was ready and the place was ready. People were ready too to serve food. Two rounds of invitations were over. But no one was willing to come. Pandit Biswanath Rath, my mother's brother, came and told father about the ongoing discussions among the village people. It was proposed that Choudhury should not sit alongside the others from the village. He had come to attend the sacred thread ceremony of his grandson. The village people were not in the least bothered that he would feel insulted if he was not allowed to sit with the others. I met the people and told them that I could have made alternate arrangements had I known about the matter earlier. I also told them that I could not insult my father-in-law since he has already arrived to take part in the ceremony. I said I would

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have no other option except to feed the low-caste people of the village and dump the rest of the food in the village pond if they did not come. I pleaded that I did not want to insult either my father-in-law or the villagers. I said I would donate five rupees to Lord Gopinath, the presiding deity of the village, as penance and I requested them to come and partake of food. Finally, they agreed. The villagers were aware that I had made extensive arrangement for the feast. Conflicts in the villages were resolved in this manner. Pandit Biswanath Mishra, my uncle, recited *slokas* to regale everyone present when the brahmins sat down to have lunch. Everyone had a hearty lunch and they praised all the arrangements profusely before returning. Those who had tried to throw a spanner in the works were disappointed.

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# Empathetic Friend

Annada had a holiday at Bombay and Madras with his family before coming to Dhenkanal and Cuttack in 1939 February. He had taken leave for two months to visit different places in India. He was returning to Calcutta via Orissa. He had sent me a picture postcard of the Ajanta Caves from Bombay. It was a picture of Buddha's wife. Then he wrote me from Madras that he was coming to Dhenkanal and Cuttack. Misfortune was waiting for him at Cuttack. His wife Lila, son Punyasloka, daughters Joya and Dipti and a baby son were with him. The baby took ill at Cuttack. He was admitted to the nursing home at the Cuttack Hospital. But the baby could not be saved. Lila was consumed with grief. The English nurse attending on her offered her some wine to lessen her grief. Lila's throat had been filled with the wine of grief; there was no place in it for any other kind of wine. The nurse seemed to be helpless when she refused the wine. We returned griefstricken from the hospital. Annada took his remaining family back to Calcutta and then to Comilla, the place of his posting. I received a letter from him a few months later.

20th June, 1939
Comilla

My dear Hara,

I have ever wished to write to you but always at a loss for words. They say time is the great healer: don't believe them. Time works when love is idle. Where love keeps vigil, Time can only

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restore appetite and bring back energy and make the usual active life possible. In short time can oil the body machine. It is utterly unable to fill the heart or wipe its silent tears or make it forget. How stupid I was when I prescribed the time remedy to grieving folk! The right remedy is to love incessantly and have faith in loving God who unites, disunites, reunites us according to our soul's prayer.

Lila has outwardly recovered. Punya has made amazing progress in his studies. Little Joya is fast growing up.

Our misfotune had a silver lining. How generously you came to my aid and sweetened my anxiety! You have been a brother to me. May you retain your soft and sincere nature. With a little luck you might have caught that train and saved my child by your right advice. Had you not been held up by someone the following evening, things might have been different. Lila remembers you with gratitude.

Best regards to you both. Love to your children.

Yours affectionately,

Anu

Annada and Lila had been overwhelmed with grief in this manner several times. It was reflected in their letters and conduct.

Annada always recalled his own grief when he found someone else going through a similar phase. Intellectualism has not been able to rule over the kindness of the couple.

Annada stayed in our house or in the house of Harishchandra Ray, his uncle, when he came to Cuttack. Harishchandra Ray was Harish's Uncle to all of us. He loved us like sons. He lived like an idealist although he served the government.

We had a similar kind of misfortune as Annada. We too lost a baby son. Having received the news from Baikuntha, the empathetic friend Annada had written a letter.

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26th June, 1939
Comilla

My dear Hara,

What is this that Baikuntha writes? Are you that Hari whose misfortune he mentions? Is it possible that you who generously helped a poor child in his fatal illness a few months ago should be destined to be a helpless spectator in an identical case concerning your own child? Lila is deeply moved. What can one sorrowing mother say to another? Or one sorrowing father to another? You have caught our contagion. This is how friendship is rewarded! We wish we could be with you at this hour.

You have always believed in God. There is none else that can give you the best relief. Pray for the little one to whom life was denied so soon—who was torn away from his playmate to face the unknown before he had gathered enough strength and joy.

This is a mystery which mankind has not yet been able to solve. Those who talk of chance and void and all that do not know what they mean. All that we know is that God has been exceedingly merciful to us in our own lives. He cannot fail to be so to our children here or hereafter. Wherever they be, love to the brim of your heart and always pray for the one that is unseen. May he come back to you.

Yours affectionately,

Annada

Our sorrows had not come to an end as yet. We got some solace in our exchange of letters with Annada. Annada and Lila loved their children. They were always worried about them. They came from Madras to Cuttack by the Madras Mail which reached Cuttack at midnight. Annada had written me earlier to make arrangements for the night's stay at the dak bungalow near the railway station or in the college hostel. He was afraid that the children would have a disturbed sleep in the night if they ventured too far into the city at midnight. The children have since grown up and

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have set up their own homes. Yet the parents still worry for them. They lived for the children.

The sacred thread ceremony of my second son Basant was also held in the village. It was not as grand as Baby's ceremony even though a few people had come from Cuttack and Puri. Chintamani Acharya, Lingaraj Mishra, Chakradhar Babu and others were there from the morning till the evening to look after all the arrangements. We were in the village four days before the ceremony. Ananta (Anu), who was younger to Basanta, suffered from smallpox the day after we reached. All of us were depressed. We wanted the ceremony to be done with somehow. Suchitra (Budhi), the youngest daughter, suffered from the same two days later. We returned to Cuttack after Anu got slightly better. I had carried Anu on my shoulder from inside the house to the car. The daughter had to be lifted to the car. Anu recovered at Cuttack. But pock marks were left on his face. However, the daughter did not recover. I sat beside her throughout the night the day before she passed away. She breathed her last at about eight in the morning. I left the room after that to come outside. Lingaraj Babu (Pandit Lingaraj Mishra of 'Samaj') arrived immediately to console us. I can still hear the last words of my daughter—'Put on the fan at full speed'. That was not the end of our woes. Rajat (Kuna), the baby son who came after Anu, also got afflicted with smallpox during the illness of the daughter. Father had come from the village. He had sat beside the death bed of the baby. I was on the verandah. My wife was in another room hoping against hope. Kuna too passed away two days after the death of the daughter. Radhanath Babu of 'The Samaj' had come at that time to console us. I would remember for ever his help at the time of the death of my younger brother Krushna and the baby son. I am ever grateful to him. My wife was heartbroken at the death of two children in quick succession. We received sympathies from many people. But that did not lessen our grief.

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# Cooperative Organisation

Cooperative societies and cooperative banks were started at a very slow pace in the districts of Puri, Cuttack and Balasore in the second decade of the twentieth century. A cooperative society had been formed in our village while I was still in school. Father was a member of the society. At least ten members were required to form a cooperative society by contributing a nominal capital. A central cooperative bank became functional at the district level by taking a number of cooperative societies. The cooperative societies availed loans from the bank at very low rate of interest to re-lend the money to its members for the purpose of agriculture and small business. Loans were provided at reasonable rates of interest. The loans could be repaid on easy instalments. People had benefited a great deal through such societies in countries like Denmark. The British Government had introduced this system in India at a non-government level because of the success of the system elsewhere. It was a self-governing organisation. Only a few government employees had been engaged for a general supervision. Everything else was in private hands. I had seen in my childhood that Krupasindhu Mishra and Acharya Harihar Dash, teachers of the Bana Vidyalaya, came to examine the accounts of the society formed in our village. They were directors in the Puri Central Cooperative Bank. My uncle Gopinath Mishra was also a director for a while.

Kalindi was already working for the Cuttack Central Cooperative Bank by the time I started practicing law. Sarat was a deputy magistrate

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and he had been posted as the assistant registrar of the cooperative societies of the Cuttack Circle. Satish Chandra Ray also held a similar post. N.K. Ray, an extremely sincere officer, had been appointed as the deputy registrar at Cuttack. The office of the two Assistant Registrars was in Buxibazar while N.K. Ray's office was situated on the Cantonment Road. The Cuttack Central Cooperative bank had its office in a double-storied building in front of the Cuttack Civil Court near the Lalbagh Police Station. Ramachandra Dash, a lawyer, was its secretary. I was elected as a director of the bank a few days after I bought a few shares of the bank. Gradually, I became closely associated with the bank's work. I had to manage the section of the bank that dealt with issuing decrees. I had to go to Jamshedpur, Chhapra and other places in Bihar to attend the annual conferences of the Bihar-Orissa Cooperative Federation. I had been elected as a member of the working committee of the Federation for a number of years as I took an active part in the activities there. I used to go to Patna every two months to attend the meetings of the working committee. Many distinguished people like Prof. Bipin Bihari Ray, Chintamani Acharya (lawyer), Jadumani Mangaraj (Congress worker), Bankanidhi Patnaik (Headmaster of Khurda High School), Padmacharan Patnaik (lawyer from Puri and a poet), Brahmananda Mohanty (lawyer from Puri), Prafulla Chandra Patnaik (Balasore), Rajendra Sen (Manager of Kujanga Estate), Saroj (?) Bose (Headmaster of Kujanga High School) and others worked in the cooperative sector at the time in a private capacity. Most of them were confined to Orissa. I had the opportunity of working and getting recognition at the provincial (Bihar-Orissa) level. Godbole Saheb and Unsurge Saheb (both I.C.S. officers), who worked as the Registrars of Cooperative societies at the time, came to my house to pay courtesy calls whenever they came to Orissa on tour. That had made many people unhappy (although not exactly envious). A few even passed sarcastic comments behind my back and sometime within my hearing: "He is a saheb. Therefore, sahebs visit him in his house." Such digs were apparently made in jest. But a note of regret hung somewhere in the air.

When the first Land Mortgage Bank was started in Orissa, Bipin Babu became its Chairman and I became a nominated director. This went on for several years. Bipin Babu and others considered my work and advice to be important which encouraged me a great deal. I had been amazed to know that N.K. Ray, the deputy registrar, appreciated my 'skills and farsight' (the language has been borrowed from a report prepared by him) in the cooperative sector. In fact, it was not exactly so. I had not contributed such a great deal. I only took a more active part in the discussions held in

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meetings and committees which might have created such an impression. My proposals were automatically and unanimously adopted in the annual conferences of the federation. Hence, the registrar and the deputy registrar discussed any proposal put forth by the government with me before they were taken to the meetings. This had not gone unnoticed by others. The reason was simple. While others were disinterested in examining the reports and circulars relating to cooperatives, I did that as a matter of habit. Hence, my views were taken seriously.

N.K. Ray was a Bengali. He was educated and sophisticated. He was not only a christian by religion; he was also an upright man. He worked as assistant registrar in Bihar before coming to Orissa as deputy registrar. He had purchased a small plot of land at that time in Hazaribagh to build a house. He was supposed to inform the government about the purchase of any immovable property as per rules. He had not done that. A few years after he came to Orissa, he felt that he had violated the principles of law by buying immovable property without taking any permission from the government. As a follower of christianity, he believed that he had to make a confession. Once, while he was on a ship while returning to India from England, he informed the government that he had bought land several years ago at Hazaribagh without taking any permission from the government and that he was repenting for the lapse. The government implemented its rules blindly. The government had already passed an order suspending him from his job for violating government rules by the time the ship docked at Bombay. Ray came to know about it the moment he landed at Bombay. His wife was with him. Ray was not bothered too much about it. He came to my house at Oriya Bazar to have tea the day after he reached Cuttack. Raisaheb Bhikari Charan Patnaik, Laxmidhar Mohanty, Bipin Bihari Ray and a few others were also present. All of us were enraged when Ray recounted the incident to us. It was natural that everyone would praise him and denounce the government. The guests decided that I should write and inform Godbole Saheb about the incident. It was further decided that I should mention it that the action of the government was improper and that the cooperation movement would suffer a setback in Orissa if Ray was no longer there. Accordingly, I wrote a long letter to Patna. I could not tell for sure if the letter had any impact or not. Ray too had sent an explanation. I had seen the explanation before it was sent. The suspension order was finally revoked after more than a month. I was only a four year old lawyer at the time, young in age and still trying to make ends meet. It was my good fortune that I had been able to earn the goodwill of others.

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Three years before this incident, it had been decided to take up village development work through cooperatives in villages near Cuttack as per the advice of Ray. Rai Bahadur J.N. Bose of Calcutta had a zemindari that included the village Anakhia about twenty miles away from Cuttack. That area was selected hoping that he would help us in our efforts.

A society was formed at Cuttack for the purpose. It was called the Orissa Rural Reconstruction Cooperative Society Ltd. The regulations were framed and the society was registered. About twenty highly placed people that included Parija Saheb, Tripathy Saheb, Harilal Banerjee (the Deputy Director of Agriculture), the Collector of Cuttack and others became members of the society. I was drafted as the secretary. It was decided that everyone would contribute a sum of fifteen rupees per month and funds would be sought from elsewhere if necessary. The work started. Everyone agreed because of the contagious enthusiasm of N.K. Ray. Village Anakhia was selected first. A meeting was held with the villagers to discuss how they could carry out the work proposed by us. People were encouraged on seeing such highly placed people involved in the programme. Jayakrushna Mishra, a local youth, was engaged on a monthly salary of fifteen rupees to initiate the work. Cultivation of cauliflowers, turnips, potatoes and tomatoes, poultry farming, bee keeping, adult education, etc. were started for the first time. Initially, we went there once every week. Later, we made fortnightly visits. Some other programmes were gradually undertaken. A trained man was appointed on a salary of a hundred rupees per month to help people in agricultural activities. A Christian young man called Salman was engaged later to supervise the work. I had the full responsibility for this work. The British Collector of Cuttack was transferred some time later and D.P. Sharma, a Bihari I.C.S. officer joined in his place. He was slightly taken aback when I requested him to be a member of the society. He did not give his consent immediately and told me that he would get in touch with me later. Perhaps he did not have much faith on a young lawyer. A month later, his consent reached me along with fifteen rupees. Perhaps N.K. Ray had persuaded him. I became close to Sharma in due course. We had visited Anakhia together more than once. He came from an aristocratic Brahmin family of Bihar. He had some devoutness even though he was an I.C.S. officer. He had many years to go before retirement. But he was not enamoured by the high-ranking job. He was independent-minded. As a result, he always had problems with the government. Finally, he resigned from the job and went back to his homeland. We met one evening in a shop when I was a judge at the Patna High Court. I could not recognise

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him instantly. He recognised me first. An aristocratic muslim gentleman was with him. He praised me a great deal before him reminiscing our days together at Cuttack. It was not very unusual in the changed circumstances.

Philip Sahib (C.L. Philip, I.C.S.) was the Commissioner of the Orissa Division. He lived in the Lalbagh Palace. There were five divisions in the Bihar-Orissa province. Orissa was one of them. Philip came as the chief guest to an annual function of the Anakhia centre. Many people from Cuttack had also attended it. Many highly placed officers went there for the first time on the occasion of the annual function. About five to six hundred people had gathered from the surrounding villages. Sports competitions and agricultural exhibitions were held. Incomes from the cultivation of vegetables were compared. Finally, a meeting was held. I was showered with accolades for my efforts. Philip got me associated thereafter with several government organisations as a non-government member. The untiring efforts of N.K. Ray had helped in the success of village industries in Anakhia. It had an exemplary effect on the whole area. Potatoes, cauliflowers, turnips and tomatoes are cultivated everywhere these days. Poultry farming has become commonplace. No one remembers our efforts now. Recently, I had narrated the progress we had made in Anakhia when I attended the annual function of a high school near the village. An old man stood up in the meeting and said that he had seen everything himself. Jayakrushna Mishra reminisces about those days when we meet. Only the future can tell if a thin stream of water will turn into a huge mass of water. But the thin stream is hard to locate in the beginning.

N.K. Ray was not in Orissa when it was declared as a separate state on the 1st April, 1936. Satish Chandra Ray was trying to become the registrar of the new state. He had the competence for the job. But he was not a popular man. The first Congress ministry was formed under the leadership of Biswanath Dash in 1937. Satish Babu had written me a letter on 15.8.1938 to help him in his endeavour.

15.8.38
Patna Circuit House

Dear Mr. Mahapatra,

As you are probably aware, I have come here to Patna in connection with the bifurcation of the B & O Provincial Bank. I am glad to tell you that the question has now been happily

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solved. We have got more than we bargained for. We shall have to pay to Bihar Rs. 3,75,000/- as against their dues of Rs. 7,64,000/-. Payment will be in eight annual instalments and there will be no further interest. The jurisdiction of the Registrar C.S. Bihar will cease as soon as C.B.s in Orissa confirm this arrangement, i.e. almost immediately. The question of appointment of a registrar will therefore crop up immediately and I hope you will kindly do all that lies in your power to help me in the matter. At your instance the representatives of central banks have voted for a whole time provincial service registrar. Mudaliar Report now supports it.... As regards my case, you know it fully and I wish for a no better advocate. I rely fully upon your help.... Please take up this question immediately....

Yours sincerely,

Satish Ray

Sarat had decided to stay in Bihar and not come to Orissa. Hence, I deemed it fit that Satish Babu should be appointed as the registrar in view of his experience. Two other senior deputy magistrates were also lobbying for the post. Satish Babu was more capable and experienced than them. I explained the matter to the Chief Minister. He was disinclined in the beginning. But he finally agreed to the proposal. Satish Babu joined as the registrar. But he turned out to be highly inactive. He was unhappy when the matter was pointed out to him. He hardly kept any contact with me till his retirement. He used to come often to my house between 1932 and 1939. He did not feel the necessity to visit me thereafter. Eaten bread is soon forgotten.

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# SEPARATE STATE

I had been hearing about the unification of all Oriya-speaking areas and *Utkal Sammilani* since the time I was studying at the Chaibasa School. We used to subscribe to newspapers from Orissa. I used to read those regularly. When it was decided that Krushna Chandra Praharaj, the zemindar of Baliabedha of Midnapore district, would preside over a conference of the Utkal Sammilani, he had got the presidential address written by father. The zemindar of Icha in Singhbhum too had done the same thing on another occasion. Unification of Orissa had formed a prominent part of both the write-ups. Agitations had started in 1902 under the leadership of Madhusudan Das to bring all Oriya-speaking areas under a separate administration. The Utkal Sammilani had been started with that objective as also to protect the collective interests of the Oriyas in 1903 under the presidentship of Sriram Chandra Bhanja, the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj. A meeting had been held at Rambha in Ganjam the year before that had been attended by many leaders. It had been decided there to launch the *Utkal Sammilani*. I had seen a large-sized photograph of that meeting in a cupboard in our house in the village. I have also seen the same photograph a number of times elsewhere. The photograph showed that father, Gopabandhu Babu and Ramachandra Das, mukhtiar, had attended the meeting. I used to hear discussions about the Utkal Sammilani and the unification of Orissa in our house as father was intensely involved in these things. He had collected some papers and books relating to these when he had written the two presidential addresses for the Sammilani. I had an opportunity to go through those.

Oriya-speaking areas had been scattered in Madras, Madhya Pradesh and Bengal. Bihar and Orissa were separated from Bengal in 1912. As a

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result, the Oriyas were scattered in four different states. They were in a minority everywhere. Their interests were naturally ignored and there was no scope for their advancement in any field. The Oriyas believed that they could exercise their rights and bring about improvements in their situation if all Oriya-speaking areas were unified. There was a demand from all quarters to accord the status of a sub-province to Orissa. The Utkal Sammilani was at the forefront of such demand. The Sammilani had included people from all walks of life. Even government servants supported the Sammilani. Till 1920 December, the Sammilani had no programme to confront the government in any matter. The conference of the Sammilani was held on December 31, 1920 at Chakradharpur under the presidentship of Jagabandhu Singh of Puri. The proposal for the non-cooperation movement had been earlier passed in the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress. With the weight of Gopabandhu Dash behind it, the proposal was adopted by the Utkal Sammilani by a majority. This alienated the government servants and Congress opponents from the Sammilani. A few of them openly opposed the Sammilani. I was always associated with the Sammilani as also the Chhatra Sammilani from my college days. I used to collect subscriptions for the Chhatra Sammilani while in school. I was its secretary while in college. I also presided over the annual conference of the Chhatra Sammilani while I was a lawyer. Even now, I believe that I must associate myself with students' organisations. Orissa Chhatra Sammilani was closely associated with the Utkal Sammilani. The conference of the Chhatra Sammilani was held at the same venue as soon as the open conference of the Utkal Sammilani was over. After the Chakradharpur conference, the two organisations had their conferences at different places and times. Close association between the elderly people and the youth was hampered in the process.

The basic objective of Utkal Sammilani was the unification of all Oriya-speaking places. When the Indian National Congress adopted the principle to form states on the basis of language, the demands of Utkal Sammilani garnered more support. Two graduates had published a book in English with the title 'Oriya Movement' while we were studying in college. Their names had not been mentioned in the book. But one of them was Niranjan Patnaik of Ganjam who had carved out a niche for himself later in the Congress and the Parliament, and whose son-in-law Janaki Ballabh Patnaik and daughter Jayanti Patnaik have distinguished themselves as the Chief Minister of Orissa and Parliament Member respectively. Many facts and arguments had been put forth in that book in favour of unification of Orissa. The demands for unification were

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intensified after 1927 December when the Simon Commission was set up. The Commission had been constituted under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon to examine the possibilities and extent of administrative reforms in India. Efforts were made to put forth the demands of Oriyas before the Commission. Madhusudan Das, Bhubanananda Das, Braja Sundar Das, Bichitrananda Das, Lingaraj Panigrahy, Madhusudan Panigrahy, Bhubaneswar Rath, Mandhata Gorachand Patnaik, Harihar Mishra and others were busy in the mission. Rajendra Narayan Bhanja Deo, the Raja Bahadur of Kanika, Ramachandra Mardaraj, the Raja Saheb of Khallikote and Vikram Dev, the Maharaja of Jeypore had taken important part in it. Krushna Chandra Gajapati, the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi, had spent an enormous amount of money to further the initiatives. A complex situation arose for Orissa when the Congress decided to boycott the Simon Commission. There was no possibility of getting the direct cooperation of the Congress leaders for Orissa. Pandit Godavarish Mishra, Pandit Nilakantha Dash and others had played an important part in the activities of the *Utkal Sammilani* and unification of Orissa with the inspiration of Pandit Gopabandhu Dash. But they had to distance themselves at the time of the visit of the Simon Commission.

The Congress boycotted the Simon Commission wherever they went. The Commission neither got the support nor was welcomed by the people anywhere. It was welcomed only by a handful of highly placed officers of the government and a few supporters of the government. I was studying in the Patna College when the Commission visited Patna, the capital city of Bihar-Orissa province. The Raja Saheb of Kanika was an Executive Councillor there. His son Shailendra Narayan was also there. With their help, we decided to draw the attention of the Commission somehow towards the demands of Orissa. The Commission was scheduled to reach the railway station early in the morning. The Congress had repeatedly cautioned everyone that the Commission was not to be welcomed. We prepared several large placards that proclaimed "Welcome Simon Commission, Orissa demands separate province, amalgamate all Oriya speaking areas, Oriyas scattered in five states." We went after midnight to the special platform where the members of the Commission were scheduled to alight in order to put up the placards. The Station Master initially tried to prevent us from doing so as he thought that we belonged to the Congress. We spent only a hundred rupees to put up all the placards on the platform. We went there again early in the morning and waited for the Commission to arrive. The Commission was not only happy to see the placards when it got down from the train; the members also carried away

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a few placards with them. Notwithstanding what others might say, I am convinced that this had greatly helped the cause of the unification of Orissa. This was clear from a statement made later by Attlee (who became the Prime Minister of England), a member of the commission. The Raja Saheb of Kanika and others were extremely pleased at our success. However, I was inwardly ashamed of myself as I had gone against the Congress dictat. Who was I? I was a non-entity—just a college student. But I derived pleasure out of the fact that I was known everywhere as a Congress supporter. I was full of remorse as I believed that I had stabbed the congress in the back.

A memorandum was submitted to the commission about the demands of the Oriyas. A sub-committee was formed with three members of the Commission in 1928 with Attlee as the Chairman. They examined the problem and made recommendations. The report of the Simon Commission became public on 27.5.1930. The Round Table Conference was held in London after that from 12.11.1930 to 19.1.1931. The Maharaja of Paralakhemundi visited London during that period and tried his utmost through the India Secretary for the constitution of the separate province of Orissa as also to include outlying areas like Paralakhemundi and Jeypore in the newly formed province. The Raja Saheb of Khallikote had also visited London at the time. Long telegrams were being sent to the India Secretary at the time by several organisations of Orissa and their ·copies were being sent to the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi. The Utkal Sammilani had taken a leading role in these efforts. Radhanath Babu (The Samaj) was also active in this work. He collected facts from various sources, procured maps of different areas and helped in writing the memorandums.

The government set up a committee under the chairmanship of O'Donnel Sahib on 18.9.1931 to examine the problems of unification of Oriya-speaking areas and constitution of a special province of Orissa as a result of the recommendations of the Simon Commission, the discussions at the First Round Table Conference, untiring efforts of the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi and repeated endeavours of the Utkal Sammilani. Phukan (from Assam) and Mehta were members of the Committee. It was known as the O'Donnel Committee. Everyone made a last-ditch effort as the formation of a new province depended on the recommendations of the Committee. I had just started practicing law at the time. Pandit Nilakantha Dash had prepared a long and well-considered memorandum for the purpose. As he was about to set off for Jamshedpur to give evidence before the Committee, the Congress High Command directed him on 10.1.1932 to refrain from doing so. Rajendra Prasad and others from Bihar

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inwardly opposed the unification of Singhbhum with Orissa. They had more influence in the congress than the leaders from Orissa. As a result, their wishes were carried out. The report of the O'Donnel Committee was made public on 19.4.1932. B.C.Mukherjee, I.C.S. was the secretary of the Committee. He had later come to Orissa as the Chief Secretary. We were disappointed by the recommendations of the Committee. A separate province had been recommended. But there was no provision for Paralakhemundi and Jeypore to be included in it. Singhbhum too had been left out. Many Oriya-speaking areas in the south remained outside the province against all expectations. Phukan and Mehta had recommended for the inclusion of Jeypore and Paralakhemundi. It was a minority opinion. But we launched a strong agitation and held several protest meetings on the basis of that. Bhubanananda Das and others were eager to have a separate province anyway. But we opposed it strongly. We got resolutions passed in the meetings held at Cuttack, Puri and Berhampur that the new province was unacceptable if Paralakhemundi and Jeypore were not part of it. The resolutions were being sent to England. The year 1932 passed in this manner. The Maharaja of Paralakhemundi went again to England and tried to portray our opinions and demands as those of all Oriyas. He also made out a case that the separate province would be entirely unacceptable by the Oriyas if the public opinion was not heeded. Recently, an article had been published in '*The Samaj*' that the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi had been able to influence the India Secretary for including Paralakhemundi and Jeypore in the new province on the basis of a cablegram sent by me.

Bhubananada Das, Bichitrananda Das and others convened the Orissa Leaders Conference at the Sriram Chandra Bhavan in Cuttack in February 1933. Leaders had come from all over without any consideration for party allegiance. I was quite young. But I had been invited too. The clear objective of that meeting was to accept the recommendations of the O'Donnell Committee. The meeting started with Bhubanananda Das as the president. Bhikari Charan Patnaik, Laxmidhar Mohanty, Bichitrananda Das and others were his supporters. They argued that the offer of a separate province should be accepted even if it was truncated. Demands could be put forth later through the provincial government for the unification of the other Oriya-speaking areas. The onus was on me to oppose the move. The president softened when he noticed that most people present supported my view. At that time, the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi arrived at the place in a soldier's attire. My proposal to reject the offer of a separate province if Paralakhemundi and Jeypore did not form part of it was automatically passed at the meeting. None of the

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organisers opposed me openly after my speech even though they were inwardly angry with me. Mr. Das (Madhusudan Das) was requested by the president to address the gathering. The speech that he gave in English is still etched in my memory. A tea party was held after the meeting. Distinguished people who had not attended the meeting had been invited to the tea party. Parija Saheb and Tripathy Saheb had come. Bhubanananda Babu pointed at me there and told Parija Saheb that I was threatening to launch an agitation against him. Parija Saheb answered, "He is as poor as a church mouse. How can he do that?" The matter was dismissed lightly. But it was plain to see that Bhubanananda Babu was not exactly pleased. A white paper was released in the British Parliament on 17.3.1933, about a month after this incident. Two years later, the Government of India Act was passed on 4.8.1935 and received the assent of the Emperor of India in January 1936. As a result, two new provinces, Orissa and Sind, were formed with effect from April 1, 1936. The major part of Jeypore and the Paralakhemundi *zemindari* were included in Orissa.

Sir Jon Hubback was appointed as the first Governor of Orissa and he took oath of office in a durbar held in the hall of the Ravenshaw College on the 1st April. A few elderly leaders seemed displeased that a young, four-year-old lawyer like me had been invited to the durbar. A.B. Banerjee was the district judge at Cuttack at that time. He was a lawyer from Munger. He was a tall and heavy person. As a highly placed officer, he was expected to attend the durbar which he had done. He was amazed to see me there. Not being able to hold it back, he asked me how I had been invited when only five lawyers in all had been invited to the durbar. Subodh Chandra Chatterjee (who later became a judge in Patna High Court), Birakishore Ray (who had later been appointed as the Chief Justice), Chintamani Acharya (government pleader) and Bichitrananda Das (President of the Bar Association) were the other four lawyers to have been invited. I was the only person dressed in durbari attire from among the lawyers and the non-government people. Only the Europeans and high level government officers had dressed themselves in that fashion. I had ordered for the clothes from Calcutta as they were not made in Cuttack then. I should not have done it. It was beyond my social status. But I have often overstepped in such things. I realize later that I had indulged in excesses. But I have often been noticed by other people because of such excesses.

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# Dilemma (Capital City, Duduma)

The situation of the capital city was hotly debated after the new province was formed. That question had never been raised when agitations were going on from 1902 to 1936 for the unification of the province. We had assumed that, being the headquarters of the Orissa Division, Cuttack was the natural choice as the capital city. Those who were united in the agitation were divided into two camps now. The people from Ganjam demanded that the capital city should be constructed at Rangeilunda, midway between Berhampur and Gopalpur. People from Cuttack, Puri and Balasore created public opinion for Cuttack. An advisory council had been constituted for the Governor. A meeting of the council held at Puri under the chairmanship of the Governor was supposed to discuss the matter. Radhanath Rath, Braja Sundar Das, Brajabandhu Das and I collected papers and facts in support of Cuttack and went to Puri to explain matters to the Raja Saheb of Kanika. He was a member of the advisory council. On the other hand, the Raja Saheb of Khallikote had come prepared to present contrary arguments. He was also a member. Lingaraj Panigrahy, Gorachand Patnaik and others were supporters of the Raja Saheb. The matter had created such bitterness at the time that the separate province seemed to be a curse. Even the government servants were divided in two camps. The Raja Saheb of Khallikote said in his speech before the council that the mosquitoes of Cuttack were as large as eight anna coins, and hence, it would be

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dangerous to set up the new capital at that place. Demands had also been made for Puri. Lingaraj Panigrahy objected to the proposal by saying that Puri was unfit to be the capital city as it was the habitation of repentant widows and insatiated *mahantas.* It was easy for them to forget how Cuttack and Puri had acquired prominence in the past. We were busy in establishing the ancientness of Cuttack and Choudwar, and our arguments were also based on the present situation of institutions fit for a capital city. The arguments became so intense that it came to be discussed even at a personal level. It was not possible to take a decision about it in the advisory council. Gradually, the demand for Rangeilunda faded out.

The first ministry of the new province had been constituted with the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi, Mandhata Gorachand Patnaik and Moulavi Latifur Rahman. The matter of Rangeilunda had not been raised at the time .even though two of them belonged to Ganjam. The Congress ministry under the leadership of Biswananth Dash was sworn in after that. Biswanath Babu too had not deemed it fit to raise the matter. He resigned as per the decision taken by the Congress with regard to the Second World War (1939). As a result, the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi constituted the ministry again along with Pandit Godavarish Mishra and Moulavi Shovan Khan. They had not been bogged down by the dilemma in relation to the capital city. The War came to an end in 1945. The Congress won the general elections held after the War and Harekrushna Mahtab formed the ministry with Nabakrushna Choudhury, Nityananda Kanungo, Lingaraj Mishra and Radhakrushna Biswasroy. The question of the capital city was hotly discussed after that. B.K. Gokhale, I.C.S. had come as the advisor to the Governor during the President's Rule after the ministry of the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi was dissolved for the second time. He was known to be an efficient and graceful administrator. He had made an estimate of the expenses needed to convert Cuttack and Choudwar together into the capital city. Mahtab decided on Bhubaneswar as the capital city after he took over charge as the Chief Minister. Several agitations had been held against the move fearing that the importance of Cuttack would be lessened as a result. It had been decided to set up the capital city of Punjab at Chandigarh at the time. Hence, the opposition to Bhubaneswar waned when it was decided that the High Court, the Revenue Board, the University and other important institutions would be allowed to continue at Cuttack. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation of the new capital. Bhubaneswar was in as much of a festive mood on April 1, 1947 as Cuttack was on April 1, 1936. We had crossed the fair weather roads of Kathjodi and Kuakhai Rivers to reach

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Bhubaneswar early in the morning. I had been to Sambalpur the day before to attend the function held in connection with the Hirakud Dam. Nehru had attended the function as the chief patron. The function was concluded in the evening and I returned immediately to Cuttack. It was four in the morning by the time I reached home. I finished the daily chores and started out for the foundation laying ceremony at Bhubaneswar. Nehru and Mahtab arrived at about ten in the morning by plane. Nehru returned to Delhi after laying the foundation. I considered it to be a moral responsibility to be associated with such activities. Others considered it to be unnecessary.

A similar problem arose with regard to Duduma. The Machhkund Plan to generate electricity from the Duduma Falls near Jeypore was under the consideration of the government for a long time. The zemindari of Jeypore was under the Madras Province at that time. Jeypore was included in Orissa when it became a separate province. The river formed the boundary of the two states. Hence, both the states had a claim over the electricity generated from Duduma. The expenses too had to be shared between the two states. A controversy arose with regard to each state's share. We claimed half of the electricity generated. Madras started lobbying for a major share. It argued that Orissa did not have enough funds to invest in the project. It claimed four fifth of the total electricity to be generated. An agitation started in Cuttack against such a move. Meetings and processions were held, and memorandums were submitted. I was involved with all these. The Utkal Sammilani was revived. Digambar Rath (lawyer from Berhampur), Harihar Mishra (lawyer from Jeypore) and others took a leading role to plead for Orissa. The working committee of the Sammilani met regularly in Cuttack to track the developments. Radhanath Babu (The Samaj) had taken an active part in these meetings. Unfortunately, the Maharaja of Jeypore supported Madras inwardly, and for some reason, Lingaraj Panigrahy too followed him. Finally, it was decided that a solution would be found with Sir B.N. Rao as the mediator. We were not even given an opportunity to place all our papers and arguments before him. He took a hasty decision that Madras would get eighty per cent of the electricity generated and Orissa would get the rest. Madras was to build the dam and Orissa had to bear twenty per cent of the total expenses. This was against the interests of Orissa for all time to come. We grieved. But there was nothing we could do about it. We continued with our protests nevertheless. Radhanath Babu and I had gone to the Duduma Falls when the Utkal Sammilani met at Jeypore on the 28th and 29th of December, 1945. Radhanath Babu was elected as the president for

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the ensuing year in the meeting of the sammilani at Jeypore. I was the secretary from 1943. Intense discussions had been held on Duduma in the Jeypore conference. I met Mahtab Babu on train while returning from the conference to Cuttack and we discussed Duduma. He had written me a letter on 2.5.46 to discuss about the matter after forming the ministry in April 1946.

2.5.1946
Cuttack

Sri H. Mahapatra,
Advocate, Cuttack

My dear Harihar Babu,

The question of agreement over Duduma between Madras and Orissa Governments has created a lot of public agitation in the province. I do not know if all facts are known to you. Besides the facts, there is a legal aspect to the matter also. I would like you to kindly come over to my office in the Secretariat tomorrow, the 3rd May, at about 4.30 p.m. in order to discuss the matter with me.

Yours sincerely,

H. Mahtab

I went to meet him and we discussed the matter. There was no change in the earlier decision.

That was the end of the Duduma controversy. But Duduma did not leave me alone. Dr. G.S. Duggal Co. of Bombay had been engaged as the contractor to build the Machhkund Dam. He was a doctor by training. But he was engaged in civil construction business along with his brother Harivansh Duggal and other relations. He did not get all his dues from the Government of Madras. He filed a civil suit against it in the sub judge Court of Jeypore claiming several lakhs of rupees and engaged me as his lawyer. The government pleader of Vizag and four of his associates were the lawyers of the Government of Madras. It was a complex matter. Many documents were submitted in the court. Besides, many highly placed government officers and engineers gave evidence. The case went on from

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1956 to 1959, and finally, Duggal won. Prafulla Chandra Dey was the sub judge. I earned a lot of fame in the case. I became quite close to the Duggal family in the process. I had accepted the hospitality of the Duggal family at Dusseldorf in Germany for two days when I had gone overseas once. I had never thought that Duduma would open up such an opportunity for me in life. Many such experieces have come my way in life without any solicitation on my part. I am grateful to God for all these.

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# Utkal University

The first election was held in Orissa in 1937 after Orissa became a separate province in 1936. Nilakantha Dash was the President of the Pradesh Congress Committee. He was in charge of campaigning for the Congress which he managed to do with a great deal of skill and elan. The Congress won 36 out of 60 seats and Dash had been praised for his efforts by prominent leaders of the Congress. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had sent him a telegram saying 'Well done, Orissa'. The Congress had its first victory in Orissa. Nilakantha Babu had tried his utmost in the election. But he was disappointed when the ministry was formed. He was not a candidate himself in the election. Many people in Congress were intolerant of him. His competence was an eyesore for these people and they waited for an opportunity to cut him down to size. Everyone had thought that Nilakantha Babu would be elected as the leader of the party and become the chief minister since the Congress had won a majority because of his untiring efforts. It was expected that he would stand in a by-election and become a regular member of the legislature in six months. The seat to be vacated had also been decided. Of course, he would have won easily had he contested the election. However, he had thought that he could help the cause of the congress better by campaigning for the party in stead of contesting the election himself.

Before the meeting of the elected legislators was held to elect a leader, a rule committee accepted the suggestion of Bichitrananda Das that the leader would be selected from out of the elected legislators. Nilakantha Babu's detractors thus made sure that he would be out of the contention from the beginning. As a result, he was eliminated from the race. There were at least twenty one legislators out of the thirty six elected who

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supported Nilakantha Babu. A few others would have supported him if his name had been proposed. The trick played by the rule committee might not have worked if Nilakantha Babu were himself present there. He had not attended the meeting of the legislators as he thought that it would be morally wrong on his part to do so. In fact, he was confident that he would be elected as the leader. Hence, he had stayed away from the meeting with a motive to build an image for himself. He and his supporters had never thought that the rule committee would take any such basic and important decision without consulting him. A few legislators, who could have objected to it, were themselves aspirants for the post of the leader after the rule was accepted. Pandit Godavarish had been elected. He was the fittest candidate to be the leader. But Nilakantha Dash directed his supporters to oppose Godavarish Babu. Biswanath Dash had been elected from Ganjam. He was not well-known in Puri, Cuttack, Balasore and Sambalpur. He had led the *Royts'* agitation in the district of Ganjam and was known in the province of Madras. He made a deal with Nilakantha Babu that he would get him elected in a by-election and renounce the leadership in his favour. Nilakantha Babu was swayed by the promise and asked his supporters to support Biswanath Dash. Perhaps he thought that he might never get the chance to become the Chief Minister if Godavarish Babu was elected as the leader of the legislators. The long friendship from the time of studying together at the Puri Zilla School, the intimacy at the Bana Vidyalaya, the ideals of sacrifices and service to the people that both had learnt together at the feet of Gopabandhu—everything was sacrificed at the altar of political expediency. Nilakantha Babu lost Godavarish Babu for ever. Ultimately, he too lost out in the game. Biswanath Babu never raised the matter of the by-election once he became the Chief Minister. But he repaid his debt in a different manner. He set up a committee under the chairmanship of Nilakantha Dash to set up a new university in the new state. Nilakantha Babu displayed his efficiency whenever he got a top job. The committee recommended that the university should be set up. But no progress was made in that direction. Orissa continued to depend on the Patna University and the Patna High Court.

The British Government was in all kinds of problems when the Second World War broke out in 1939. The Great Britain was extremely small in size. But it was considered to be a super power as it had extended its empire over a large part of the globe. It had to depend on the colonies to help it out in the war. India was the major colony of Britain. It would have been tough on Britain if it would not have received the help of India. Both money and people were needed. Discussions were started at a

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political level and the British Government went as far as to promise independence to India after the War. India announced unqualified support for the war efforts immediately. The congress had formed ministries in every state at that time. The congress was willing to help on condition that Britain should announce about independence after the war in the parliament. The British Government was willing to make promises. But it was not willing to make a declaration to that effect. The congress ministries resigned in all the provinces when the two sides could not come to an agreement. This was supposed to be an indication that India was not going to take part in the war. The ministry resigned in Orissa too. The Governors ruled the provinces.

Intense fighting was going on in the east. Japan was fighting against Britain. People were terrified because of the possibility of an attack on the east coast. Netaji Subhas Bose was determined to take advantage of the war to oust the British from India with the help of the Germans and the Japanese. He was looking for an opportunity. He was in touch with the members of the Forward Bloc and his faithful associates for this purpose. He had come to inaugurate the Provincial Youth Conference when it was held in Cuttack in 1939 August. Jadumani Mangaraj was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Netaji's relation with Nilakantha Babu and Godavarish Babu had been extremely close from that time. The war broke out immediately after that. After the resignation of the congress ministry, efforts were made secretly to provide an administration in Orissa through elected representatives. This was the brainchild of Netaji. The administration would ostensibly provide support for the war by concealing its real motives. Nilakantha Babu and Godavarish Babu sought the help of the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi for this purpose. The Maharaja wanted to be the Chief Minister. But he was unaware of the real intentions behind the move. He formed the ministry in 1941. Godavarish Babu became the Education Minister. He initiated work at the level of the government to set up a university. Parija Saheb was the Principal of Ravenshaw College and Tripathy saheb was the D.P.I. They helped Godavarish Babu in his efforts. The registrar of Madras University was invited to draft the Act and the statutes of the university. Mahesh Chandra Pradhan, the Principal of Cuttack Training College, was also engaged in this work. I was summoned to help them out. The work proceeded slowly for a few days in Tripathy Saheb's residence on the Cantonment Road. The work was also carried on for some time in the first floor office of the Training College. The bill was passed in the Assembly on June 30, 1943. That was a red letter day in the field of education in Orissa. A few professors were

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however distressed that they would not be able to make any further trips to Patna. Utkal University started functioning on August 2, 1943 with the affiliation of only five colleges. Parija was appointed as the vice chancellor with effect from December 16, 1943. The members of the first Syndicate had been nominated. I became a member as the representative of non-teachers. I was elected after that to the senate, the syndicate and the academic council from the registered graduates' constituency till 1961. I desisted from contesting the election on moral grounds when I joined as a judge in the Patna High Court.

At one time, it was believed that the university might not be viable if only the high schools and colleges of Orissa were affiliated to it. The princely states were outside the purview of the administration in Orissa. It was important to bring the educational institutions of those areas under the purview of the university. It was not possible without the consent of the kings of the princely states. Discussions were held to solve this problem. Godavarish Babu thought that Tripathy Saheb could be sent to the kings of Mayurbhanj, Dhenkanal, Sonepur and Bolangir to persuade them. Many people believed that they were very close to each other since Tripathy's younger brother was the son-in-law of Godavarish Babu. In fact, they were detached at the family level. The relationship by marriage was extremely superficial. It never influenced their personal or official relationship. My own experience too was similar. The marriage of my eldest daughter Sumitra had been solemnised with Ranganath, the youngest son of Godavarish Babu on January 18, 1948. But there had been no change in our relationship before and after the marriage till his demise on July 26, 1956. He was a guest in his own house. How could it be otherwise with outsiders?

Shyama Chandra Tripathy had been chosen as he was an intimate friend of the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj. It was possible on his part to get the consent of the Maharaja. It was hoped that the other kings would agree to the proposal if the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj gave the green signal. Besides, Tripathy himself was a quiet and friendly person. He knew all the right people. Tripathy was scheduled to leave for England the day after his name was mooted. He had already availed of leave for the purpose. The Chief Minister told the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi that Godavarish Babu might not be able to dissuade Tripathy from undertaking his trip. The Maharaja called Tripathy personally and explained everything to him. He told him that the university could not continue to run without the consent of the kings of the princely states and that he was the only person who could do it. Tripathy had to cancel his ticket on the ship and postpone

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the trip. Tripathy started out to meet the kings the next day and returned a few days later with their written consents. The important role he played in the formation of the university may be known from this event. It is sad that no one remembers his contribution. I had talked about it once at Vani Vihar (the University campus) on the occasion of the foundation day ceremony. A few others were also aware of it. Dr. Haribandhu Mohanty knows the details. An amusing incident may also be narrated here. Tripathy was a firm believer in astrology. He showed his horoscope to different people and discussed astrology with several people. Many astrologers visited him too. There was a primary school teacher among them. I am not able to recall his name. He had asked him about his trip to England. The teacher said that there were some problems with his journey. He reiterated his statement the day before the maharaja of Paralakhemundi summoned Tripathy. Tripathy countered the astrologer by saying that he had already availed of leave and his train ticket from Cuttack to Bombay and his ticket from Bombay to England were confirmed. There could not be any further problem. The teacher-astrologer returned quietly. When his trip was cancelled on the request of the chief minister, Tripathy called the astrologer to express his anguish before him. He also praised him a great deal for his prediction. One cannot go against his destiny.

My relationship with the University was extremely close. It was quite natural in the context that I was associated with it for a long period of time right from the beginning. Apart from the senate, syndicate and the academic council, I was also associated with the finance committee, the board of studies, etc. It was quite an experience for me to represent the University in the centenary celebrations of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras Universities as also in the golden jubilee function of Lucknow University. The Vice Chancellor (Parija) had not attended the first two functions. The other two functions were attended by the Vice Chancellor (Chintamani Acharya) and me. I had the opportunity of getting acquainted with eminent educationists and administrators in the process. I also had to attend the Inter-University Board meeting. Punjab's representative Teja Singh had stayed in my house when the Board's conference had been held at Cuttack. The humourous comments and affectionate remarks made towards each other in the speeches of Sarojini Naidu, the Chancellor of the University, Govind Ballabh Pant, the Chief Minister and Prime Minister Nehru were highly enjoyable. The Madras function was the best organised. The meeting at Calcutta was so crowded and disorganised that it was necessary for an eye witness like me to go through the newspapers to

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learn about the proceedings. The arrangements at Bombay had been made in phases. I had the opportunity of saying a few words at these places as a delegate from outside. Chintamani Babu, his wife and I had gone to Bangalore and Mysore from Madras. He told me repeatedly that both Laxmi and Saraswati had blessed the place.

Sir Laxman Swamy Mudaliar, the vice chancellor of Madras University, had impressed me the most among the vice chancellors I had met. He was the Vice Chancellor for a period of fifteen years at a stretch. He was a doctor by profession. He worked in a private hospital, and yet, he managed the university with aplomb. He was learned in several disciplines. He was an eloquent speaker too. His brother Sir A.L. Mudaliar was an equally eminent person. He had been the vice chancellor of Annamalai University. A meeting of the representatives of the universities had been held once before the centenary celebrations under the chairmanship of Laxman Swamy to discuss the policy of the government to exercise control over the universities. I was the only person deputed from Utkal University. I had been overwhelmed there by the grace of the Mudaliar brothers as also the vice chancellor of Kashmir University (the Chief Justice of Kashmir High Court). Their discussions, analysis and eloquence were of a very high order. But I was amazed to see them encouraging an inexperienced person like me to participate in the discussion. I had been assigned the responsibility of drafting the minutes of the meeting after the discussions were over. The same thing had also happened when the Inter-University Board had met at Chandigarh. Nehru had inaugurated the meeting there and had stayed with us till the end. Parija Saheb (Vice Chancellor) also had attended that meeting. Dr. Balabhadra Prasad had attended the meeting as the vice chancellor of Patna University. From Chandigarh, we had gone to see the Vakra Dam along with Mrs. Parija (Sundaramani). I still cherish the enjoyable company of Parija and the repeated offer of *paan masala* by Mrs. Parija on the way. I am grateful to them both for their affection towards me. His confidence on me in matters relating to the university had kept me active and alert at all time.

Invitation was received by our university when it was decided that the Commonwealth Universities' Conference would be held at Montreal in Canada. Parija and I were nominated to attend it on behalf of the university. The university budget had no provision to finance our trip. An appeal was made to the Government of Orissa. Mahtab Babu was the chief minister. He agreed verbally. Lingaraj Panigrahy was the education minister after retiring as the chief justice of the High Court. For some reason, he was antagonistic towards me when he was in the High Court.

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He had also tried in vain to harm me on occasions. How could he approve of my representation to an international conference? He delayed the matter until ten days before the conference and finally said no. I was terribly anguished that Parija could not make the trip either because of me. Parija could have attended the conference if approval had been given for at least one person. But Panigrahy's animosity towards me would have been apparent in that case. Parija was unwilling to talk to the chief minister about it. He dissuaded me from doing so too. Mahtab did not do anything on his own. Perhaps he did not want to do anything to help either. We received the news that all universities of India were sending their delegates. Only the delegates from Orissa were unable to attend the conference as the government did not feel it necessary. Parija was peeved because of that. I too was hurt. I had a discussion with Biju Patnaik in connection with a case two days after Panigrahy's refusal to sanction money. He had heard of the incident from someone and asked me about it. Because of his innate generosity he bought two return tickets to Montreal for Parija and me and sent the tickets along with a letter exhorting us to attend the conference. Parija was initially unwilling to pay the railway fare from Cuttack and incidental expenses at Canada from out of his pocket. But he agreed to do it on my request. The permission of the central government was necessary at that time to visit a foreign country. Parija had already obtained the permission. I had not received that letter until then. I had not taken any steps in that direction as the consent of the state government was still awaited. Parija left first as there was very little time on our hand. I telephoned to Delhi and finally managed to get the permission. I reached Montreal just a couple of hours before the conference began. Parija embraced me warmly in front of Balabadra Prasad when he saw me and told Prasad, "I am here only for him." I have never seen Parija's eyes turning moist on another occasion—not even when he lost a child. Balabhadra Prasad was there as the vice chancellor of Patna University. I was amazed to find that Parija Saheb kept on encouraging me to participate in the conference all throughout while he preferred to remain quiet. Everyone from India held Parija in high esteem. Sir Laxman Swamy Mudaliar (vice chancellor of Madras University), Professor Sidhhant (vice chancellor of Calcutta University), the vice chancellor of Tirupathi University and I had the occasion to take part in the discussions more than once. The conference had been inaugurated by the Governor General of Canada in a huge gymnasium without any fanfare. That was the first time I participated in an international conference.

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I visited Harvard, M.I.T., New Brunnswick, Laval, New York and a few other universities of America after Montreal. On my way back, I also visited London, Oxford and Cambridge Universities in Britain and a university in Paris. Parija had returned before me. Many people had been amazed at the affectionate remarks made about me by Parija the day both of us talked about the Conference in the Cuttack Rotary Club. He was not the kind of man who got sentimental in public.

A noteworthy event had taken place in New Brunnswick. It was the hometown of Lord Beaverbrook, the owner of several prominent newpapers of Britain. He visited the city at least once a year. He also had a large hotel there. Coincidentally, he was present there when I had visited the city. Ordinarily, he lived in London. A few other Indians, who had returned from the Montreal Conference, had invited me to a dinner to that hotel along with the European delegates. Lord Beaverbrook was also there. He was a huge man with a very large head. He talked fast and was a jolly man. He talked to each guest in turn. There was an Indian couple with us—Dr. Mehta, Professor of history from Baroda and his wife. He asked if any other Indian was present and zeroed in on me. How he talked! Finally, he said, "So you finally threw the English out of your country?" I blurted out, "Why, hadn't you thrown them out of America?" There were roars of laughter all around.

Parija was the first vice chancellor of Utkal University from 1943 December. The elections were held in the senate in 1948 after his term was over. Parija, Godâvarish Babu and Chintamani Acharya were the candidates. Parija and Godavarish Babu had not engaged in any kind of canvassing. Both were famous, especially in the field of education. We were amazed to see the preparations made by Chintamani Babu for the election. Canopies had been put up outside his house in Telenga Bazar in Cuttack the day before the election. All members of the senate who had come from outside Cuttack were his guests. He was quite active when the voting was in progress in the senate. Parija told me during the midday recess that he would not have stood as a candidate if he would have known that such arrangements would be made. Chintamani Babu won the election and was appointed as the vice chancellor with effect from 1.10.1948. He did not serve the full term. He resigned on 15.12.1951. Many members of the senate, who were obliged to Parija Saheb or had received help from him, had gone against him in the election. The matter had been discussed for a long time during that period. The ingratitude shown by the educated mass towards Godavarish Babu, the founder of the

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University, was also similarly discussed. Parija had lost face during this election. But it was only short-lived. He was appointed as the pro vice chancellor of Benaras Hindu University shortly afterwards. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's son K.D. Malaviya was the vice chancellor of Benaras Hindu University. He talked to Parija at Bhubaneswar while on his way to Calcutta from Madras by plane. He informed him about the appointment upon returning to Benaras. Parija stayed there for about three years.

Chintamani Babu worked hard for the development of the University. He received all kinds of help and sympathy from Mahatab Babu, the Chief Minister. I did my bit to help him out. I was ballotted out in the Senate in July 1951. Hence, I had to contest the election again. Chintamani Babu had written me a letter in his own hand at that time on 11.7.1951.

11.7.1951
Cuttack

Vice Chancellor
Utkal University

My dear Harihar,

I am very sorry that you are one of the persons ballotted out. The other gentleman is Laxmi Narayan Bhanjadeo. I know how helpful and useful you are in giving us guidance in many matters in critical moments. However, I hope earnestly you will be reelected not only to the Senate but to the Syndicate also, and I pray to God for it. A man of your ability and intelligence is very necessary to be in the syndicate and in university authorities.

Yours sincerely,

C.M. Acharya

The syndicate nullified the result of an examination held in Sriram Chandra Bhanja Medical College during the tenure of Acharya as the Vice Chancellor. A writ petition was filed by the affected students in Orissa High Court. I accepted the brief on behalf of the university without charging any fee. A few highly placed persons opposed to Chintamani Babu instigated the students and provided them with monetary help. The case went from the High Court to the Supreme Court. I had to go to

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Delhi several times. Finally, a compromise was reached between the parties. I only received my travelling allowance to visit Delhi. This case had two serious ramifications.

Mahtab Babu had already left Orissa by that time as a minister in the central government. Nabakrushna Choudhury became the chief minister. Mahtab was the pro chancellor of the University; Asaf Ali was the chancellor and governor of Orissa. A contempt case was filed against the editor and the publisher of the Eastern Times and the Prajatantra, two newspapers owned by Mahtab and published from Cuttack, for publishing a leading article relating to the examination results of the Medical College. In fact, Chintamani Babu and Mahtab were the targets. I agreed readily to take up the case on behalf of the newspapers without any fee. Barrister S.M. Bose of Calcutta (advocate general) had come to argue on behalf of us in the last phase of the case. Chief Justice Bira Kishore Ray asked after the hearing, "What would happen if the accused are not punished but reprimanded?" Sir S.M. Bose answered, "An appeal can also be made against it." The implication was that an official rebuke was also a punishment. Finally, the verdict was in our favour.

Chancellor Asaf Ali was a luxury-loving person. He was a barrister and practiced law. He stopped practicing after joining the Congress. His wife Aruna Asaf Ali was a Bengali and a Communist. She was more interested in politics than family. She rarely lived with her husband at Cuttack. Asaf Ali loved to assert his authority. He derived pleasure in displaying his authority. He used to pass written comments or made investigations through other sources if he received complaints about the functioning of the university as its chancellor. He did not feel it necessary to discuss matters with the vice chancellor. Chintamani Babu had tried to reason with him that such actions did more harm than good for the university. Asaf Ali had not been able to observe any fault of the vice chancellor. But Chintamani Babu resigned on 15.12.1951, two years before his term was over, as he found it difficult to function in the prevailing circumstances. He had not received any praise either for all his hard work. Chief Minister Nabakrushna Choudhury might have found a solution to the problem if he had wanted to. But Chintamani Babu was earlier an associate of the British Government and an opponent of the Congress. Hence, he kept quiet. The names of Mahesh Chandra Pradhan and Parsuram Mishra came up after that, and Parsuram Babu was nominated as the vice chancellor. He took charge on 17.2.1952. Parija had become the pro vice chancellor here after returning from Benaras Hindu University. He contested the elections and defeated veteran congress leader Bhagirathi

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Mohapatra to become a member of the Assembly. He joined the university again on 15.8.1955 as its vice chancellor. The then chancellor and Governor Sukthankar was unwilling to appoint Parija as the vice chancellor for a third term after his term was over. On the request of Chief Minister Mahtab, I came from Patna to Puri to discuss the matter with the governor. I explained to him that the University was being shifted from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar and the transition would be a lot smoother if Parija was appointed for another term. The chancellor finally agreed. Parija had written to me repeatedly at that time that the chancellor might think that he was trying for another term through me. I had written letters to Mahtab and Sukthankar from Patna of my own volition before coming to Puri to discuss the matter. I had also written to Parija. Elections were held to the Senate after Parija got a third term as the vice chancellor. I did not consider it right to contest for the senate as I was already a judge at Patna by that time. Parija wrote me twice and telephoned me once to say that it was wrong on my part not to come for the elections to the senate. I had explained to him that it would be improper on my part to take part in a direct election when I was a judge of a High Court. He understood my problem. But he was anguished nonetheless.

The office of the university functioned initially in a room in the warden's quarters situated in the west hostel of Ravenshaw College. It was shifted later to the Burdwan Palace. It was again moved to the residence of the Cuttack Collector. It was a double storied building in front of the Medical College. The construction of the university campus was discussed seriously after Mahtab relinquished the governorship of Bombay and became the chief minister for the second time in 1957. The university could not run in a full-fledged manner until then due to lack of infrastructure. Parija wanted the university building to be somehow constructed in Cuttack. I wanted that a place should be selected in Bhubaneswar so that the University building could be constructed in a spacious area with modern architecture. Thus, there were two groups. I was the spokesman for one group. Parija Saheb was at the forefront of the other group. He was not an obstinate man by nature. But no one dared to cross words with him. Money for construction was to be provided by the University Grants Commission. Its Chairman, C.D. Deshmukh, came to take a final decision on the place where the University was going to be located. I was called to meet Mahtab, Parija and Deshmukh. We examined two places in Cuttack and finally reached Bhubaneswar at the place where Vani Vihar (the university campus) is located now. Discussions went on there for half an hour. Parija spoke in favour of

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Cuttack while I argued for Bhubaneswar. Mahtab was quiet. Deshmukh was Parija's classmate in Cambridge. Finally, both he and Mahtab decided in favour of Bhubaneswar. It was decided that construction work would be started there soon. I had the impression that Parija was unhappy with me for advocating for Bhubaneswar. But he took over charge once the decision was made. I knew an architect of Denmark who had undertaken construction works in Nepal. I got in touch with him. He prepared the drawings. I had attended syndicate meetings a few times in the half-constructed building of the university after I left for Patna. The major argument in favour of vani vihar was the body of water by the roadside. It had been planned to convert it into an artificial lake to beautify the place and for boat racing by the students. It is indeed sad that the place is in a neglected state even now. Washermen wash their clothes there. I had drawn the attention of the vice chancellors towards it at the time of two annual functions and had been reassured that the work would be taken up soon. Twenty years have passed. But nothing has happened.

There were disturbances in the campus because of certain activities of Durgaprasad Borai, the registrar, when Jogendra Singh was the governor and chancellor. I had been appointed to enquire into the matter and submit a report. Evidence had been collected from several people over a period spanning more than a year. Many administrative reforms had been suggested in the report submitted by me.

I had been entrusted with another enquiry in connection with the Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology. There were a few allegations against the vice chancellor too. That enquiry too had taken more than a year. I had submitted my report to Chancellor B.D. Jatti, who had later become the Vice President of India. I had heard that he had sent copies of the report to other agriculture universities of the country.

There was widespread student unrest and agitation in Orissa about a year back for which a committee was appointed by the state government under the chairmanship of Harekrushna Mahtab. I was a member of the committee and had discharged my responsibilities to the best of my ability. The report had been accepted by the government. The agitation cooled down. The students alleged later that the government was delaying taking any action on the report of the committee. I had to be in touch with the state government because of that even though the term of the committee was over.

I was involved a little bit with Patna University when I worked as a lecturer in Law. This was before the establishment of Utkal University.

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My relationship with Patna University was renewed after I went to Patna High Court. Vice Chancellor, Balabhadra Prasad had requested me to do so. K.K. Dutta was the vice chancellor after him and he too got me involved with the university's activities. The university had formed a committee at the time with me as the chairman in connection with the syllabi of the law college. Mahavir Prasad, the Advocate General, Lalit Narayan Sinha, government pleader (who later became the Attorney General of India), and Mr. Deshpande, Principal of the law college were the members of the committee. The syllabus, system of education and mode of appointment of faculty as suggested by our report have been given effect to later. It had also been adopted by a few other universities as the recommendations of the Mahapatra Committee. The central bar council is shortly going to prescribe almost similar guidelines.

I used to take an active part in the Indian Law Institute before I left for Patna. I used to attend its annual conferences and other seminars. I had the opportunity of getting acquainted with many people from outside Orissa as I was involved in such work. These people also became more aware of Orissa because of my association with them.

Ravenshaw College is the biggest and oldest college of Orissa. The Commissioner of Orissa Division acted as the president of its governing body. Later, it was the revenue commissioner of Orissa who performed this function. I had been nominated as the first non-government president in 1945. S. Ray was the principal of the college at the time. I served as the president for another six years after retiring from Patna. Direct contact with colleges and universities has always been a challenge for me. I have never grown tired of such work. On the other hand, I have enjoyed it.

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# Rotary Club

The Rotary Club had been established on February 23, 1905 in Chicago, U.S.A. Paul Harris was a lawyer there. He often felt lonely, and hence, he discussed the matter with three other persons. The four of them decided that they would meet once a week to exchange views among themselves. The other three were Gustavus Loher, a mining engineer, Sylvester Seal, a man in the coal business and Hiram Shori, a tailor. One of them had an office on 711, Eulott Building on the Dearborn Street. The first meeting of these four persons had been held there. It was named as the rotary club as the meeting was held in turn in each one's office. They had decided from the beginning that they would do something for the welfare of others apart from looking after their own business. They had also resolved to strive to create goodwill among people in a sense of fraternity and friendship. A printer joined them as the fifth member. Gradually, people joined the club from other professions. It was decided not to take more than one person in the club from the same business or profession. All levels of the society were supposed to be reflected equally by one member from a business or profession. Rotary Clubs were gradually established in Chicago and other cities of America. It spread to Canada in 1910, Dublin in 1911 and Latin America (Havana) in 1916. It came to Asia for the first time in 1919 in Calcutta. Gradually, the club has been established in all areas of the world as a great social institution.

A club had been established in Patna in 1944 with the help of the rotary club of Calcutta. B.K. Gokhale, I.C.S. was a member and the vice president of the club. He came to Orissa during the president's rule as the advisor to Governor Hawthorne Lewis. A few of my acquaintances were the members of Patna rotary club. I was eager to start the rotary club at

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Cuttack. Bihar had its club; I was interested that Orissa should have its club too. I had expressed my eagerness the first day I met Gokhale. He too expressed his desire to do so. He invited Parija Saheb, Tripathy Saheb and me one evening to his residence in 6, Cantonment Road to discuss the launching of the rotary club in Cuttack. We decided to consult other people in the matter and meet on a later date. Eleven of us gathered in his house a few days later and decided to start the rotary club. Engineer Shaw Sahib, Captain Omrao, Lingaraj Panigrahy (he had moved from Berhampur to Cuttack for practising law), Mohammed Yusuf, a businessman dealing in salt, Parija, Tripathy and me were present that day. Ten days later, Dr. U.N. Vakil, the then President of Rotary club of Calcutta and a European member came to Cuttack and arranged a meeting of about twenty persons on the lawn of Gokale's residence beside River Mahanadi. Gokhale was elected as the president, and Panigrahy and I were elected as joint secretaries. The Cuttack rotary club was formed in this process. It was decided that the club would meet every Tuesday evening. This was in 1945. It was the first rotary club of Orissa. There were two clubs in Bihar at that time in Jamshedpur and Patna. Panigrahy attended every meeting and spoke well. But Gokhale and I had to shoulder all responsibilities of the Club. Panigrahy remained as another joint secretary for name's sake. The meetings of the club were held for a few months in the university office in the West Hostel of Ravenshaw College. The venue was later moved to the Burdwan Palace and finally to Nari Sangha Sadan. Rotary Governor Nitish Chandra Lahiri had come to Cuttack to present the charter of the rotary international. Lahiri presented the charter in a dinner attended by about one hundred people that included Governor Lewis Sahib and Commissioner Marwood. Gokhale had presided over the function. I had to conduct the meeting there as the secretary. Panigrahi offered the vote of thanks. It was quite a memorable evening. We had opened the second rotary club of Orissa at Berhampur, Ganjam when I was the president. I was closely involved with the rotary club from the beginning as I was with the university. I had never thought then that I would be the Rotary Governor some day. Nitish Lahiri of Calcutta was the first president of Rotary International from Asia. I became a member of the Patna rotary club after I moved to Patna. I was elected as the Governor of Rotary 325 District in 1967. Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, East Pakistan, Nepal, Sikkim, Assam, Manipur, Burma, Nagaland, etc. were included under District 325 at that time. The Governor's chief responsibility was to visit each of the Rotary Clubs in those areas to help in the advancement of the cause of Rotary. I had

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attended the International Assembly at Lake Placcid in America for a week for the purpose. Newly elected governors assembled there from all corners of the world. All the officials of the rotary international and other experienced, former officials participated in the discussion. The horizon of the mind automatically got expanded in rubbing shoulders with so many people from so many countries. The Rotary International Convention had been held in Nice in France that year. I had attended that too. More than twenty thousand Rotarians had assembled there. I had been housed in the suburb of Monac, about thirteen miles away from the convention hall. The world famous Monte Carlo was in its neighbourhood. The richest people of the world went there to gamble. There were huge houses on the sea. I went there one evening with a friend to find out for myself why it was so famous. Beautiful women had surrounded wealthy people with wine glasses in hand in dim light. Everyone was immaculately dressed with .make-up to match. Loads of currency notes lay on the tables where gambling was in progress. Everyone's attention had been rivetted on the table. No one seemed to be enjoying himself. Every one was quiet and apprehensive. I heard that lakhs of dollars and francs changed hands in a moment. It was the backyard of the filthy rich. The paupers could only sigh. The two of us did not belong to either group. We returned from the pilgrimage without spending any money and without making any offering.

I had seen the university conference in Montreal. But the rotary convention was in a class of its own and it continued for three days. There was no opportunity for me to speak. Richard Evans was the outgoing international president. He was godfearing, simple and honest. His speech was like a prayer in a church. Luther Hodges took over from him. He had wide experience in administration and he was confident of himself. He was involved with the rotary club in the U.S.A. We had the opportunity to enjoy the musical and dance performance of accomplished artistes of France at the convention dinner. I had to move to a corner as I was a teetotaller. The more one drank the more mobile he became until he could lean on someone's shoulder. I had never thought that I would ever get an opportunity to see the people of all the countries of the world enjoying themselves to the limit amid so much merriment. Another evening on the beach was even more enjoyable. It was the annual exhibition of flowers. Everyone from the city was on the beach. Loads of flowers arrived on the backs of horses and donkeys, in hand-pulled carts, in motor cars, in more than a hundred horse-drawn carriages, on the heads of young ladies and so forth. There did not seem to be any limit to the loads of flowers. It was amazing to see so many flowers in one city at a time. Artificial flowers seemed to rain after that. It was a strange scene. Everyone flung flowers at

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everyone else. The fragrance of unlimited flowers, the mammoth crowd and the sea in the background created a heavenly scene. The inhabitants of the city are indeed fortunate to enjoy such a scene every year.

I became governor for a year from 1967 July on my return from the convention. I went to various places to visit or launch new rotary clubs. It provided me with hands-on experience in social service. The job was difficult as I was also a sitting judge of the High Court. Time turned out to be a constraint to visit different places by car, train or plane on Saturdays, Sundays and other holidays while discharging the responsibilities of a High Court Judge on weekdays. It was a difficult year for me. But I was convinced that I was doing something worthwhile for the common man. There were discussions, reviews, lectures and dinners in every club. The annual conference was held in Kolkata in March 1968 under my supervision with a great deal of pomp. I would not have been able to see it through without the help of many Rotarian friends of Kolkata. The district assembly had to be arranged earlier in Batanagar and on the beach at Digha in June 1968. These too passed off smoothly. The travel expenses of the governor are reimbursed by the rotary international. Other expenses had to be take care of from one's pocket. The physical strain, however, took one's toll. I went once on a visit to rotary clubs in Ranchi and Ramgarh for two days. I returned to Patna on Monday and went straightaway to the High Court. I felt ill while I was sitting in the court at 12 noon. I passed out in the lift for a while even as I was moving to my chamber. The news spread rapidly throughout the High Court. I was embarrassed. An employee of the High Court gave me some homoeopathic medicines which he was carrying in his handbag. A few judges remarked that one could not function as a High Court Judge and Rotary Governor at the same time. The doctor was summoned and he said that nothing was the matter with me except exhaustion. Everyone breathed easy. I wondered how I was going to complete the schedule of visits to the rest of the clubs. Anyway, I finished the job by June 30. Bihar Sharif was the last club in the list. It was 30 miles away from Patna. Five years after my term was over, the rules were amended making it obligatory on the part of the Governor to finish the visits in the first six months of assuming charge. I would have had no option except to refuse the offer of Governorship if the rule had been in force five years earlier.

I went once again in 1980 to attend a convention in Chicago. It was the birth place of rotary. I saw the huge office of rotary there. I met many friends from overseas. Chicago is a beautiful city with a large lake. The

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tallest building and the museum are worth seeing. I noticed that huge Negroes dominated the place. I had not seen that in any other place in the U.S.A. I had the impression that the Negroes were a suppressed lot. I was indeed amazed to observe that white Americans were scared of the Negroes in Chicago. They were the drivers of all the taxis and buses. They behaved arrogantly with all and sundry. I noticed that young, single women were scared to board the taxis driven by the Negroes.

The Oriyas of Chicago had arranged a dinner when they came to know that I was there. It was a pleasure to talk to them. The son of Shradhakar Supakar showed me a letter there. Shradhakar Babu had read about my visit to Chicago from the newspapers and asked his son to meet me. Bhabesh Das, the son of a friend of mine, was aware of my visit through his twin brother Paresh Das. I also met Sudhansu Mishra from my village although I did not know that he lived in Chicago. I went to their houses and met their family members. The daughter of another friend was engaged in research in Geography there. I could not meet her as the matter had slipped out of my mind. It was natural that my friend would blame me later for my laxness. I stayed in Chicago for more than a week. I stayed in a hotel on the lake for the first five days. I spent the last four days in the huge Hotel Hyatt near the airport. The Rotary Council on Legislation met there. I was an elected representative. A former senator of the U.S.A. who had served as the Speaker for a few days presided over the meeting. He was quietly efficient. There were about three hundred delegates and everyone was eager to speak. There were about two hundred draft legislations. There were just three days on our hands. We worked from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and again from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. The decisions taken there would be conveyed to all the clubs of the world. If one tenth of the total number of clubs objected to a decision, it would be taken up for discussion at the next convention. Thus, the Council had a great deal of responsibility. An efficient chairman was needed to push through everything in quick time. Discussions took place in French, English, Japanese and Portuguese. But the decisions were announced in English. The evenings were free. I was amazed to see the free entry of prostitutes in such elegant hotels in such a civilised country. One did not have to take a second look at them to know that they were prostitutes. They sat at a central place in the hotel hoping that someone would pick them up to act as an escort. They are educated but lost. I was anguished to know that there was such acute unemployment in that country. I haven't seen such flagrant behaviour at any other famous hotel of the U.S.A.

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I was instrumental in starting the rotary club at Cuttack and was involved with it all throughout. I was associated with the rotary club of Patna for ten years. About sixty rotary clubs have been set up in Orissa between 1945 and now. A separate rotary district would come into existence from July 1984 taking Orissa and a part of Madhya Pradesh. Already 20,396 clubs have been set up in 158 countries of the world. According to an estimate, there are 9,30,500 persons per profession. There is no other social organisation of such magnitude in the world. Every Rotarian pays a sum of $20 (₹ 200) annually to the Rotary Foundation at the international level besides helping out at the club and district levels. Some people pay more. About twenty crore rupees are collected every year. The money is spent in providing scholarship to about thirteen hundred young men and women to study for a year in another country. One hundred and fifty teams of six persons each are sponsored to spend between six to eight weeks with the family of a Rotarian in another country. Apart from this, more than seventy public service programmes are undertaken intensively. There is no other non-government organisation which provides public service on such a scale. I am happy that I contributed my bit to bring this organisation to Orissa.

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# At the Time of War

The Second World War started in September 1939 to unnerve the world. We were studying in the school during the First World War. The headmaster used to give us a weekly lecture on the progress of the war with the help of maps. We were not concerned with the other effects of the war. But we were hit directly during the Second World War. A congress ministry functioned at the time under the leadership of Biswanath Dash. Biswanath Babu lived in a double storied building named *Priyanath Bhavan* near Nimchouri. It had a huge open terrace. His friends met him there on most days. Lingaraj Mishra, Radhanath Babu and I went there often. The Acharya came at times. We discussed everything under the sun. Biswanath Babu once gave a dinner to high-ranking officers on that terrace. Mats and banana leaves had been laid for them on the floor. The sahibs had come wearing dinner jackets. We and the Indian officers were clad in dhoties. The firmness of Biswanath Babu was apparent in many cases. Once Governor Hubback charged him during a conversation, "Do you know who you are talking to?" Biswanath Babu had shot back, "I know. The prime minister is talking to the governor." The chief minister was known as the prime minister those days. The governor became quiet upon hearing that. J.R. Dane, I.C.S. was the revenue commissioner. It was decided that he would be appointed as the governor for a few months as Hubback was going to England on leave. Hubback was ready to leave. Dane too was ready to be sworn in. He had already stitched the ceremonial clothes of the governor. Biswanath Babu was adamant that an officer serving under him could not be appointed as his boss. He consulted Chief Minister Kher of Bombay over phone in the middle of the night. I was present there. Thereafter, he informed Delhi

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that he would resign if Dane was appointed as the governor. He also mentioned that the congress ministries of other provinces supported him on the issue. Hubback's leave was cancelled. Dane felt offended and went on long leave. Biswanath Babu's demands were met. Once he had called Satyanarayan Sengupta, Bichitrananda Das, Lingaraj Mishra, Birakishore Ray (Advocate General) and me to his office to discuss something. Lingaraj Babu called someone walking on the verandah outside in a loud voice even as discussion was going on among us. Biswanath Babu stopped him and admonished him that he should not shout at the place. One morning he carried some files and went to the Khandagiri dak bungalow along with Radhanath Babu and me. There was some confrontation with the governor in the offing. He consulted us to make sure that his firmness did not turn into rudeness. The congress ministries of all the provinces resigned when the British government was not willing to promise independence to the country after the war but implicate India directly in the war.

All documents and files were carried to Sambalpur from Cuttack as it was apprehended that Japan might attack India any time. Bomb shelters were constructed at various places in Cuttack and other coastal areas. Lights were shaded everywhere. Headlights of cars were also shaded. A chief warden (Parija Saheb), a head warden (me) and wardens were appointed on an honorary basis to ensure that people observed adequate safety rules.

The situation favoured a few unscrupulous businessmen who created an artificial scarcity of foodgrains, especially rice. The permit system was introduced. Many were arrested in this connection and cases were filed against them. They ran to the lawyers for bail. L.P. Singh, I.C.S. was the collector of Cuttack. He was a patriotic person. An honest man too. He and I decided that anyone who was granted bail would have to help poor children study. A few thousand rupees had been collected in the process through the collector and a fund had been set up in Ravenshaw College. Help is provided to poor students from the fund even now.

The government monitored the movements of the Congress leaders as they were opposed to the war. Jayprakash Narayan had stayed in the house of Dr. Balabhadra Prasad in the college campus for two days when he had come to Cuttack. L.P. Singh, the collector of Cuttack, was asked to make an enquiry. He wrote back that he would have himself provided hospitality to Jayprakash if he had sufficient space in his house. Jayprakash was Balabhadra Prasad's friend. He had only stayed in his house. No politics was involved. Ram Manohar Lohia had once come to Cuttack on the sly.

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L.P. Singh knew about it. But he kept quiet. His wife was supportive of him. They were from Bihar. They were at Delhi when I went to Patna. He went as governor to Assam later. Even now, his letters fondly reminisce about our association at Cuttack. Chandra Shekhar Jha, I.C.S. became the Collector of Cuttack after L.P. Singh. He was a Maithili Brahmin from Bihar. His father was a lawyer in Darbhanga. I knew him from Patna College. He needed my cooperation in various things when he was the collector. There was a lot of work to do in connection with the movement and accomodation of soldiers. He had taken charge of the supplies department later. Godavarish Babu was the minister of education and supplies in the wartime ministry of the maharaja of Paralakhemundi.

The provincial youth conference was held in August 1939 at Cuttack just before the war started. Firebrand Jadumani Mangaraj was the chairman of the reception committee. Subhash Bose had come to inaugurate the meet. Pandit Nilakantha Dash and others were directly involved with it. I was also closely associated with them. Netaji's provocative speech was unforgettable. The government arrested Bhagabati Panigrahi and a few of his Communist associates as soon as the War started. A conspiracy case was filed against them. The trial was held inside the jail premises. Raj Kishore Das pleaded for the accused without any fee. He even had to spend money from his pocket for the purpose. Barrister S.N. Mukherjee of Calcutta had come in connection with the case. He stayed in my house. He and Raju Babu conducted the trial in mutual consultation. H. Lal, I.C.S. was the judge. We knew that there would be punishment for the accused. Barrister Mukherjee conducted the case inside the jail during the day. He regaled us with his anecdotes in the evenings when he returned home. The judgment was delivered on 3.12.1940 which went against the accused. Sessions Judge Maher Sahib heard the appeal against the judgment. His judgment was delivered on 3.12.1941 upholding the verdict of the lower court. Bhagabati died two years later in pathetic conditions in a cottage in Dagarpada. He had been stricken with cholera. We had not been able to know about his illness in time. The loss of the young prodigy was irreparable. The *Navayuga Sahitya Sansad* had been formed by him. '*Adhunik*' magazine had been published by him in 1936 May. He had also published another magazine titled '*Mukti Yuddha*'. The magazine had been banned after the Quit India Movement in 1942 August.

Another case had been filed against Ashok Das during the War. I had accepted the brief for him.

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A case was filed against Harekrushna Mahtab under the Defence of India Act because he had described the Government of India as a quisling in a press statement. Quisling means a traitor. It had been alleged that the opinion would mislead the public and hinder the war efforts. The case continued for a long time in the court of Musaheb Khan. I was the lawyer for Mahtab Babu. Musaheb Khan carried all the documents to the Collector for a consultation before announcing his verdict. Mahtab Babu was fined one hundred rupees. He was in the Ahmednagar Fort jail at the time with other leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel. All the leaders had been arrested immediately after the resolution of Quit India Movement was passed in the congress committee. I filed a revision petition against the verdict in the High Court.

Another such case was filed against Nabakrushna Choudhury regarding one of his speeches. He had said that the defeat of the Allies at Pearl Harbour revealed their weakness in organising for the war. This had been said in extremely rude language. I was handling the case on his behalf. He was sentenced to be imprisoned by the magistrate court. The punishment was upheld on appeal. I filed a revision petition in the High Court thereafter. Mahtab's case and this case came up for hearing in the court of Judge Meredith, I.C.S., Judge of the Patna High Court, in the Cuttack Circuit. Many lawyers were present in the court room along with the supporters of the Congress. Bira Kishore Ray, advocate general, was my opposing counsel. I read the speech of Naba Choudhury in the court room from the beginning till the end. Meredith Sahib turned crimson in anger. He interrupted me to ask why I was reading the entire text. Bira Babu joined in alleging that I was trying to incite the people present in the court room against the war. I humbly submitted that the lower court had not considered the speech in its entirety. Its opinion had been formed only on a few sentences and words used in the speech. The judge fell silent. I continued reading the speech. I wanted that everyone present should know the contents of the speech notwithstanding the verdict that may be given. My submission was that the strong words used in the speech could not be constituted to be a crime. It could be described as unpleasant, undignified, or at the most, condemnable. There were no untruths in the speech. People had been exhorted to organise themselves which was likely to help the cause of the government at the time of an attack by the enemy.

It was argued in Mahtab's case that the spies had been described as quislings. It was not implausible that there were such people on the side of the allies both on the battlefield and off it. Meredith Sahib acquitted both

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the accused. There are many such instances where the English judges delivered such impartial judgments even at the time of the war. Needless to say, we had fought these cases as a matter of duty, spending money from our own pockets. In the process, we had to often forego cases where we could have earned a fee.

The governor ruled the state for a while after the congress ministry resigned. A ministry was formed later under the leadership of the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi in November 1941 with the help of Nilakantha Dash and the tacit blessings of Netaji Subhash Bose. On the face of it, this had been done to provide manpower for the war to the Allies. Nilakantha Babu was the chief of the war front. Godavarish Babu and Shobhan Khan were the two other ministers. The Maharaja of Paralakhemundi and Shobhan Khan were not aware of the real intentions behind the formation of the ministry. Netaji had formed the Azad Hind Fauj with the belief that the British could be defeated in war with the help of the Japanese. It would help matters if an elected government was in power at the time of the Japanese attack. Nilakantha Babu and Godavarish Babu shared this view. They had formed the ministry for this purpose and persuaded the Maharaja to lead it.

The congress was opposed to this move. They too opposed the move of the British government to implicate India in the war. A no confidence motion was moved against the ministry of the maharaja in the Orissa Assembly. A futile attempt had been made by the congress to split the votes. Nabakrushna Choudhury was arrested before the discussion started on the no confidence motion to lessen his influence. I was requested by the congress to do something immediately. I applied for the bail of Naba Babu in the magistrate court. It was turned down because of the pressure of the government. The same thing also happened in the sessions court. I went to the Patna High Court to make an appeal. Senior Advocate Gajendra Prasad Das opposed it vehemently on behalf of the Government of Orissa. The appeal was heard in the Court of the Chief Justice A.T. Harris and the bail was granted. The order was sent by telegram to the Cuttack Jail on my request. The order was also sent by post. I left Patna that evening *via* Calcutta. The vote on the no confidence motion was to be taken the day I reached Cuttack. I was a lecturer in law at that time. I went to the college straight from the railway station to take my classes. The telegram about the bail had reached the day before my arrival. I had assumed that Naba Bhai would have been released. Two persons from the congress party came to the college to inform me that Naba Bhai had not been released until

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then even though the telegram had reached. I was anguished that all my efforts and expenses had borne no fruit. I rang the secretary of the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court from the college telephone and expressed my grief. I went to the residence of Chandra Shekhar Jha, Collector after that. It was about nine in the morning. He gave me a cryptical smile. I was infuriated. The matters relating to the jail were administered by him. When I mentioned about the bail, he shot back that the manuals provided that one could not be freed from the jail on the basis of a telegram. I said that I was willing to file an affidavit before him that the Patna High Court had granted bail to Naba Babu before two days. The letters were delivered at this time and the letter containing the bail order was among them. Jha was forced to inform the jail authorities to release Naba Babu even if he was not happy about it. I returned somewhat reassured. Naba Babu arrived in a procession amid slogans at the Assembly Hall in Ravenshaw college at ten thirty in the morning. The council of ministers looked crestfallen. News reached that the Chief Justice was about to initiate actions against the collector of Cuttack and the superintendent of jail. Chandra Shekhar Jha wanted me to give it in writing that the order by post arrived just as he was going to release Naba Babu on the basis of my statement. The collector was sandwiched between the Council of Ministers on one side and the High Court on the other. It was natural that my sympathies would be with him.

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# The Viceroy's Vote

Biswanath Dash and the Raja of Khallikote were dead against each other. The Raja was angry with Dash because he had led the Praja Movement against his zemindari. A case was filed that the list of election expenses submitted by Biswanath Dash was misleading as a result of which he was debarred from contesting elections for a period of six years. I filed a case on behalf of Biswanath Babu in the sub judge court at Cuttack to get relief from the order. Biswanath Babu was in the jail at the time. I had gone to Barrister S.C. Mitra of Camac Street, Calcutta to seek help in preparing the appeal. He was known to Biswanath Babu. He helped without charging any fees. The trial continued in the court of Dwarikanath Das, sub judge. Chintamani Acharya appeared on behalf of the government. He was not happy with the complimentary remarks of the Court and the others present for the new style in which I was conducting the case. There were no witnesses on either side. Arguments started from the very beginning. I was totally busy in this work for the next eight days. We lost the case finally. The case had been filed as it was necessary to bring certain facts to the records of the court. No appeal was made against the verdict. There would not have been any time left for further appeal.

Biswanath Babu wondered about the alternatives. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the Viceroy could raise a question of law in the Supreme Court where public interest was concerned. Biswanath Babu was eager to take advantage of it when he was informed about it. I went to Barrister Nirmal Chandra Chatterjee of the Theatre Road, Calcutta for consultations on the draft memorandum. He too was known to Biswanath Babu. I started out for Delhi with printed copies of the

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memorandum. Sri Ananta Mishra of Cuttack Students Store had bought a ticket to Delhi for me on the direction of Biswanath Babu. I was ready to take care of the expenses at Delhi from my own pocket.

I was supposed to seek the help of B. Shiva Rao, an influential journalist of Delhi who was known to Biswanath Babu. I went to his house to meet him. His learned, foreigner wife was sympathetic towards me. But her husband was elusive. I returned to the hotel disappointed. Next day, I went to the residence of Sir Ashok Ray who was a member of the law council of the Viceroy. He did not think much of me because of my diminutive appearance. The memorandum would be first considered by his secretariat. He tried to dismiss me lightly when he heard about the purpose of the memorandum. He asked me why I had travelled such a long distance instead of sending the memorandum by post. I told him that I had come to explain the matter. He asked, "Can't we understand it?" I answered, "A case is not over in the court only by filing the appeal and the documents. A party is also heard." Sir Ashok Ray was himself a barrister. I noticed that he was a snob. He had no regard for other people. He asked me to deliver the memorandum or send it later. He was not willing to hear anything from me. I returned from the place with the memorandum.

I fixed an appointment with Jenkins and met him the next day. He was an I.C.S. officer and the private secretary of the Viceroy. He too advised me to leave the memorandum with him. I told him that I had come all that far to hand over the memorandum personally to the Viceroy as the applicant was in jail. I requested him to inform the Viceroy about me. I also told him that the Viceroy may not give me a hearing but I would be gratified if he received the memorandum from me personally. In such a case, I could tell the applicant upon my return that the Viceroy had accepted the memorandum for consideration. He went away and returned after a while. He informed me that five minutes had been allotted to me after half an hour to hand over the memorandum to the Viceroy. Something seemed to be better than nothing.

I was called. Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, was seated in a relatively small, well-decorated room. He stood up to shake hands with me. He was the antithesis of Sir Ashok Ray. He received the memorandum from me after asking me why I had taken the trouble of travelling such a long distance. I spoke very briefly because of the constraint on time. He said that he had never received such an application earlier. He asked me about the subject matter. I got an opportunity to tell my tale. The A.D.C. showed himself after five minutes. I heard the soft ringing of the hidden bell with Wavell.

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But my meeting with him continued for forty five minutes. I was satisfied that I had done my job. He was happy that he had obliged me. Private Secretary Jenkins Sahib jotted down my hotel address. I returned contented.

I received an invitation by post the next day to attend a dinner in the Viceroy's bungalow scheduled after two days. I stayed back for two more days. I had to stitch a tail coat for me as the invitation card said that it was obligatory. Sir Ashok Ray was totally amazed to see me there. He talked to me about the memorandum for more than fifteen minutes with a great deal of enthusiasm. I had met him several times after he took leave of the council and returned to Calcutta. Incidentally, I constructed a house near his residence in Wood Street some time later. He was ill and bedridden at the time. He passed away recently.

The answer of the Viceroy reached us after more than a month that he did not feel it necessary to refer the matter to the Supreme Court. I believe Sir Ashok Ray had gone out of his way to show his allegiance to the empire and swayed the matter against us. Lord Wavell had come to Cuttack a few months later. The Maharaja of Paralakhemundi was the Chief Minister and he had hosted a tea party in his honour. Wavell reminisced about our meeting at Delhi when he saw me there. The Maharaja was listening intently to our conversation standing beside us.

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# Ranpur Kingdom and Integration of Princely States

The Praja Movement had made an impact on the princely states of Orissa. An enquiry committee set up by the government under the chairmanship of Balwant Mehta had exposed the atrocities perpetrated by the kings. Sarangadhar Das, Pabitramohan Pradhan and others had taken an active part in this agitation. Baji Rout, an innocent boy, had been shot dead in Dhenkanal. Sachi Routray, an eminent poet of Orissa, had written an immortal poem on him. Bezelgate, a white political agent, had been murdered on the streets by the inflamed subjects in the kingdom of Ranpur.

There were numerous princely states in India. Twenty six such states were there where Oriya was spoken. Ranpur was one of these. It was a small kingdom. Brajendra, a minor, was the King of Ranpur, and his mother Basantamanjari ran the administration on his behalf. She was the daughter of the King of Nilgiri. She was educated and graceful. She took me along with her to Colonel Bedi, the political agent, for consultations whenever she faced some administrative or legal hassles. I noticed that she was gradually getting tired of administering the kingdom. I reasoned with her to turn over the administration of the kingdom to the Government of Orissa. She realized that my advice was on a sound footing. The Congress leaders were released from the jail in May 1945 when the second world war came to an end. Mahtab formed the ministry on April 23, 1946. I

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went to the official residence of Mahtab in Cuttack along with the Rajmata of Ranpur and proposed to him that the administration of Ranpur should be taken over by the Government of Orissa. The legal angles in this connection were discussed. There were demands for self-rule in the princely states. But no demand had ever been made that the government should take over their administration. The kings ruled independently under the sovereign British Government. Provincial administration was also under the same sovereignty. I explained that the provincial administration could take over the administration of a princely state with the consent of both the parties and that the two administrations could be integrated. I was the first person to suggest that the word 'integration' could be justifiably used in this case. Incidentally, all the Oriya-speaking princely states except Mayurbhanj were integrated with the province of Orissa through a treaty signed at Cuttack immediately after Independence. Mahtab's efforts and the able guidance of Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel had made this possible. The treaty was labelled as 'integration' rather than 'surrender'. A circuit bench of the Patna High Court was present at Cuttack on the day the integration took place at Cuttack. Manoharlal and Ramaswamy were the two judges on the bench. Nilamani Senapati sought the advice of Manoharlal about the integration. Ramaswamy was familiar with international law. Manoharlal sent for me in the evening to discuss the questions posed by Nilamani Senapati. The Ranpur problem was easier to solve after independence. It was easier for Independent India to integrate the princely states either by force or with their consent. My humble contribution in the matter was not known to anyone else except the abovementioned three persons.

I heard later that Mahatma Gandhi had objected to the annexation of the princely states believing that it was being done by force. I was told by Banamali Patnaik in the presence of Motilal Pandit that Mahtab had informed Gandhiji that, on behalf of the Ranpur Kingdom, I had brought forth the proposal for the voluntary integration of the kingdom with the province of Orissa. I had never asked Mahtab whether he had actually written such a letter.

The Rajmata of Ranpur had been elected to the Assembly later and become a Deputy Minister after the integration of the princely states. Her son Brajendra was a very close friend of my son Baby. The untimely death of the mother and the son filled their family with grief.

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# Misunderstanding

Unfortunately, I have been often misunderstood in life. Rami (Ramachandra Mishra), a childhood friend of mine, had stopped talking to me for a number of years forgetting our long friendship believing that I opposed his marriage to a certain girl. I had been hurt by his behaviour towards me. He realized later that he had misunderstood me.

Lala Nagendra Ray used to publish a magazine called '*Deshakatha*'. He used to severely criticize many people in the magazine. He was a prodigious writer. Bira Kishore Ray became the first Advocate General of Orissa when the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi became the Chief Minister. His wife Latika Ray had shed the *purdah* inspired by her friendship with Sarala Devi. Both of them took active part in social events. The '*Deshakatha*' published articles at regular intervals casting aspersions on them. Raghu Rout was a municipal councillor. He was not concerned about anything or anyone including himself. He was often ill. He was always short of money because of his addiction to *paan* and alcohol. He sought and received monetary help from many people as a social worker. I too paid him money quite often. He started publishing a magazine called 'Satakatha' (The Truth). He published defamatory articles about people, be they true or false. It was only natural that such articles would be discussed among the common people. I even suspected that he collected money from people by threatening to publish garbage about them. Raghu Rout was sitting on my verandah one morning waiting for me. Inspector of Police Laxman Mishra saw him sitting there when he came to my house that morning. He was the brother-in-law of my wife. He had married her

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cousin. He was also my friend from my college days. He went upstairs and told my wife that Raghu Rout was sitting on the verandah outside. My wife blurted out, "He must have come for money!" Laxman Babu had passed on this information to Bira Babu and Sarala Devi in course of a conversation. 'Satakatha' published defamatory articles about them at times. Bira Babu assumed that I paid money to Raghu Rout to encourage him to write filth against him. Our relations were strained from that day onwards. He did not bother to ask me if there was any truth in it nor did he seek to find the truth.

The first advocate general of Orissa was to be appointed when the first ministry under the maharaja of Paralakhemundi was formed. The Chief Justice of Patna High Court had recommended the name of Subodh Chandra Chatterjee for the position. We succeeded in persuading the maharaja and Mandhata Gorachand Patnaik, one of the ministers, to appoint Bira Babu in the position. Bira Babu was kind towards me from the day I had started practising law. I had been associated with him in a few cases. He often praised me before others without any reservation. However, our relations had been strained because of a misunderstanding. His son Subhash worked in the Air Force. A telegram reached one day saying that he was missing in war. We were in court at the time. Bira Babu was inconsolable. I took him to his home in my car. I stayed there till the middle of the night and tried to get the correct information by telephoning to Delhi. I bought a radio for him that evening so he could get the war news at intervals. I noticed that he had changed his opinion of me thereafter.

Orissa became a separate province in 1936. But it was still under the jurisdictions of the Patna High Court and Patna University till 1948 and 1943 respectively. The circuit court was being held in Orissa as before. The chief justice of Patna High Court recommended for the appointment of Subodh Chandra Chatterjee as a judge in Patna High Court when the latter was not appointed as the advocate general of Orissa. He retired after about three years and Bira Babu was appointed as a judge in Patna in 1945 July. He was the first Oriya to be appointed as a judge of a High Court. It was natural that everyone would be happy and proud about it. I arranged a dinner in my house in his honour when I found that no steps were being taken to felicitate him. Chief Minister Mahtab, Biswanath Dash, the revenue commissioner, the collector, Swami Bichitrananda Das were among the persons who had attended the dinner. Bira Babu was extremely pleased. He had written me a letter as follows on reaching Patna.

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16–7–45

Circuit House, Patna

My dear Harihar,

I have arrived here all safe and been putting up in the circuit house. It is very difficult to get a suitable house.

I shall always remember how kind you were to come out first with a sumptuous dinner celebrating my appointment. I appreciate the kindly spirit in it. To tell you frankly, some untoward circumstance intervened in our relationship which was so platonic and cordial. However, I hope, let us be united together all the more closely. I have nothing but love for you and hope you will reciprocate the same. With kindest regards.

Yours sincerely,

B.K. Ray

Latika Devi had written a similar letter after a few days.

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# Daughter's Marriage

There were three girls of the same age in Cuttack with the nickname Mini. Minati was the daughter of Basanta Babu, the headmaster of P.M. Academy, Priyambada was the daughter of Engineer-cum-Contractor Bhagabat Mohanty and Sumitra was my daughter. Coincidentally, the three of them took dance lessons from Bana Bihari Maiti of Midnapore when they were at school. The handsome Maiti had first come to my house looking for a job. The girls of decent families did not take to dancing those days. A few took lessons in singing. Bana Bihari Maiti had come in search of a livlihood to Cuttack. He knew dancing only. He showed me some testimonials from Midnapore and Kharagpur about his abilities. He started teaching my daughter Mini. The other two Minis joined later. Minati (known as Minati Mishra after marriage) is a renowned exponent of Odissi dance and has earned fame in India and abroad. Priyambada too made a name for herself. She did well in studies and joined the university as a professor. Her daughter is doing well in Odissi dance. My daughter learnt dancing, participated in competitions and gave dance performances in festivals, etc. But she gave it up altogether after marriage.

We often discussed Mini's marriage. Father too thought along those lines. A proposal came unexpectedly for Ranganath, the youngest son of Godavarish Mishra. Godavarish Babu himself had sent the proposal through his assistant Gopinath to my wife. We agreed immediately. I informed father. He was happy too. Lingaraj Babu, Radhanath Babu and I had gone to attend Ranganath's sacred thread ceremony at Banpur in my Baby Austin car. I had seen Ranganath only then. He was studying for M.A. and Law in Allahabad when the proposal came to us. The marriage

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was scheduled to be held on January 18, 1948 without matching their horoscopes. It was God's grace to receive such a proposal before we looked around for a groom. Similarly, a proposal was received by us thirteen years later for my second daughter Bichitra. The boy was Gourishankar, eldest son of Kabiraj Laxminarayan Acharya. We gave our consent immediately in this case too.

I started making arrangements for the marriage to the best of my ability. We decided to hold the marriage at Cuttack. It was done on a grand scale. The Acharya was angry with me and did not come to my house for a year when he discovered that I had given sofa set, dining table, dinner set, etc. among other things as gifts. He deprecated unnecessary expenditures.

Mahatma Gandhi went on a fast with effect from 12.1.1948. It was six days before the marriage. Everyone had been griefstricken because of the loss of life and property in the communal riots that took place after the partition of the country. Gandhiji's fast created more problems for everyone. I was hesitant to go ahead with the daughter's marriage at a time like that. I did not have the courage to ask Godavarish Babu for a postponement of the date. I went through the motion of making all the arrangements. But there was an overpowering sadness inside me. It was announced on the radio on January 18 that Gandhiji had broken his fast. The marriage was solemnised that day with peace of mind. I heard later that Godavarish Babu had been displeased with the lavishness of the arrangements. But Kailash Nath Katju, Governor of Orissa, had been extremely pleased to experience an Oriya marriage. He had come with his family and dined with Mahtab Babu and others. He had mentioned it a number of times on later occasions. Pandit Balakrushna Dash of Bhingarpur acted as the priest for the marriage. Katju had been pleased to hear the chaste Sanskrit pronunciation of Dash in reciting *mantras*. He had also been pleased with the Sanskrit speech of Pandit Biswanath Rath, my uncle, at the benediction.

Who knew that the fasting bed of Gandhiji was the harbinger of his death bed? He broke his fast on January 18, 1948. Someone threw a bomb at him on the 20th and missed. Mahatmaji dropped dead with the utterance 'He Ram!' when Nathuram Godse shot him with a pistol at 5.20 P.M. on January 30 as he was going to attend the prayer meeting. The light had gone out!

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# ORISSA HIGH COURT

The university was set up in Orissa in 1943. The Medical College was also established. The High Court was established on July 26, 1948. It was perhaps a Thursday. It came into existence twelve years after the separate province came into being and one year after independence. Kailash Nath Katju had left Orissa and become the governor of West Bengal. Asaf Ali was the governor of Orissa. He lived at the Lalbagh Palace in Cuttack. It was decided that the High Court would be established at the same place where the judge court was held earlier and where the circuit court used to sit. Rudra Prasanna Mishra, the first assistant registrar of the Orissa High Court, went to Patna to take training in the conduct of the High Court. It was decided to appoint four judges in the beginning. One would be promoted from the position of the district judge, two would be appointed from among the lawyers and an experienced chief justice would be appointed from outside the state. Narasimham was the law secretary at the time. He used to work in Bihar in the beginning in the I.C.S. cadre. But he moved to the judicial department later. He was a district judge in Bihar. He was transferred later as the district judge of Cuttack. He also worked as the revenue secretary for a few days. Nityananda Kanungo was the minister of law. No one in service was promoted as a High Court Judge when a new High Court was established anywhere in India. Nityananda Babu was influenced by Narasimham. Lingaraj Panigrahy was the advocate general after Bira Babu. There was enough justification in taking him as a judge. The Government of Orissa went to the Madras City to select the other judge bypassing everyone in Orissa. Babu Jagannath Das had been apparently born in Berhampur in Ganjam. He was a Telugu. He practiced law at

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Madras. He was on friendly terms with Biswanath Dash. It was a mystery how his name was proposed and how the chief minister (Mahtab) gave his assent to his appointment. No one from Cuttack was considered even though many efficient and experienced lawyers practiced in the circuit court here. Babu Jagannath was a congressman. The experienced chief justice was to be appointed from outside the state. Bira Kishore Ray's name came up. He had gone as a judge to the Patna High Court three years earlier. The chief minister and the law minister wanted a more experienced person. The chief justice of Patna High Court had suggested the name of another judge for the purpose. Finally, it was decided to appoint Ray.

Chief Secretary B.C. Mukherjee suggested my name for the position of the advocate general when Panigrahi became a judge. Governor Asaf Ali agreed to it. The chief minister agreed too. An agitation was brewing at the time in Sambalpur against the construction of the Hirakud Dam. Bodharam Dubey, a lawyer, led the agitation. He was a congressman. He had been a minister under Biswanath Dash. The chief minister proposed to him to act as the government advocate with the hope that the agitation would weaken if Dubey was moved out of Sambalpur. Dubey was happy to accept the position. There was no precedence of anyone being appointed as a government advocate without any experience whatsoever in the High Court or the circuit court. In this manner, there was politics in the appointments in the High Court from the very beginning. When Dubey heard that I was going to be appointed as the advocate general, he insisted that he would be willing to come to Cuttack as a government advocate only if (Swami) Bichitrananda Das was appointed as the advocate general. He made it clear that he would not come to Cuttack if someone else was appointed to the position. The political expediency of moving him out of Sambalpur triumphed over all other considerations. Mahtab Babu explained to me how it was necessary to bring Dubey to Cuttack. It was fit and proper that Bichitrananda Babu was appointed as the advocate general considering his age and abilities.

Governor Asaf Ali administered the oath of office to the four new judges on a special pandal. Kailash Nath Katju had come from Calcutta to attend the function. Chief Justice Kania of the Federal Court had come from Delhi. The council of ministers and other dignitaries had attended the function.

It was necessary to make the bar association effective after the High Court was established. I was the secretary of the bar association at the

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time. I brought carpenters, wood and ply from the Newbuilt Furniture shop in Park Street, Calcutta to make long tables, chairs and lockers. About seven thousand rupees had been spent for the purpose. The bar association was supposed to return the money to me gradually. The advocates got the locker facility at a nominal rent. They kept their papers and gowns in the lockers. When the chief justice inaugurated the hall of the Bar Association, he said it would not be as much difficult for me to forego the money spent on furniture as it was to get the materials from Calcutta.

The work progressed in the new High Court with new enthusiasm.

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# The First Habeas Corpus

A lot of atrocities were being perpetrated on the subjects in Dhenkanal. The king was angry with Harmohan Patnaik, a young activist. An arrest warrant was issued against him. He wanted to escape to Cuttack upon hearing it. He was likely to be caught if he came by road. He managed somehow to reach the Dhenkanal railway station to catch the Talcher train. There are traitors everywhere. The Dhenkanal Police was informed and he was arrested at the Dhenkal railway station. The railway station was part of the kingdom. The compound of the railway station was under the jurisdiction of the British. Hence, the Dhenkanal Police arrested him and brought him to Cuttack in the same train to present him in the court at Cuttack. The administration in Dhenkanal brought about a lot of pressure to send the accused from the Cuttack court to the Dhenkanal court through extradition. Bhabagrahi Mishra was the deputy magistrate and S.D.O. at Cuttack at the time. He was holding residential office at his house at Telenga Bazar as he was ill. The day Harmohan was arrested and brought to Cuttack, Congress leader Bhagirathi Mohapatra came to me in the evening and pleaded with me to ensure that Harmohan was not sent to Dhenkanal. He said that he was sure to die if he was sent there. I was moved by the earnestness of Bhagirathi Babu and his associates. Urgent measures were called for to tackle the urgent situation. The first duty of the Cuttack court was to examine whether there was *prima facie* evidence against the accused before sending him to the court that had issued the arrest warrant and demanded extradition. I arrived at the residence of Bhabagrahi Babu with an application for this purpose as soon as he came to the office. The Dhenkanal Police was already there and was ready to take the accused back to Dhenkanal after obtaining an order

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to that effect. They would have given us the slip had there been a delay of about five minutes. When Bhabagrahi Babu read my application, he perhaps thought he was getting entangled in something messy. But there was no way out for him. He was a quiet person. He wanted to operate within the law although he would never offend his superiors. The accused was sent to the Cuttack Jail and the hearing was postponed till the next day. The application was turned down by him the next day but he allowed three days to get an order from the appeal court. It was ordered also that the accused could not be taken to Dhenkanal. I appealed in the court of the sessions judge and it was ordered that the accused would stay in the Cuttack Jail till the end of the hearing. About a month passed in the meantime. The Dhenkanal Police came every so often and threw tantrums. They came with handcuffs and ropes. But they returned disappointed every time. The King of Dhenkanal was blowing hot and cold. The sessions judge turned down the appeal but he allowed seven days to make an application to the High Court. I went to Patna. The summer vacation had started by that time. Sir Courtin Teller, the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court, had passed away, and Wart Sahib operated as the Judge Acting. To our misfortune, news was making the round just before my arrival in Patna that Barrister A.T. Harris of England would be appointed as the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court. Wart Sahib was also a barrister from England and it was widely expected that he would be appointed as the Chief Justice on a permanent basis. It was only to be expected that he should be sore by the news.

Gopal Chandra Das and Pitambar Mishra, two advocates practicing at the Patna High Court, dissuaded me to submit the application when they heard about the matter. They told me that it would not only be useless to go to the residence of Wart Sahib to submit the application; it would also be improper. He would not accept the application at his residence during the vacation. Wart was a stern person, I was told. I was discouraged by these comments. Nevertheless, I hired a hackney and went to his residence. Gopal Babu and Pitambar Babu refused to accompany me. The peon of Wart told me that the sahib was on the upper storey and he had given instruction that he was not to be disturbed. I could hear the sound of shoes on the staircase at this time. The sahib was coming down for breakfast. The judge went back upstairs when the peon handed over my card to him. The peon came out on the verandah and told me that it was meaningless on my part to wait. I could hear the sound of shoes on the staircase again as I wondered what to do next. Wart Sahib himself came out to the verandah and beckoned me to come to his office. He asked me

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the purpose of my visit and I explained the matter briefly. The questions and answers that followed were highly unusual.

*Judge:* Applications are not received during vacations.
*Answer:* How would a person get legal relief when his life is at stake?

*Judge:* Who am I to receive applications in my residence?
*Answer:* You are My Lord, the Chief Justice.

*Judge:* It has been reported that someone else would be appointed as the Chief Justice.
*Answer:* You are still My Lord, the Chief Justice.

*Judge:* But how do I give a hearing at my residence?
*Answer:* There are precedents in England where a barrister submitted an application on the beach and obtained bail for the accused while the judge and his wife came out of the sea after a bath in an almost naked condition.

*Judge:* That is England. It may happen there.
*Answer:* Would a judge from the same English soil turn so helpless here?

Wart mellowed somewhat. He asked me to take a seat. The conversation went on.

*Judge:* What is is the subject matter of the application?
*Answer: Habeas corpus.*

*Judge:* I do not know if that kind of application has ever come to me. You are talking about new things.
*Answer:* I would never have dared to take such liberty during the vacation and at an odd time if the matter was not as urgent as that. This is perhaps possible only in a High Court that follows your ideals.

*Judge:* All right. It may be so. But what is the urgency?
*Answer:* If you do not provide relief, a patriotic young man would be killed by the whimsical order of a despotic king of a princely state only because of his patriotism.

He went through the application and wrote an order in his own hand that Bhabagrahi Mishra, Magistrate, and Ray Saheb Satyabadi Nayak,

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Superintendent of Cuttack Jail, were required to show cause why Harmohan Patnaik would not be released from the Cuttack Jail instead of being sent to the Dhenkanal Jail.

On my request, he also directed that the order was to be sent by telegram. It was ordered that the hearing would be held after the vacation and Harmohan was not to be sent to Dhenkanal until after the disposal of the application. Bail was granted. Wart Sahib saw me off and went inside for his belated breakfast. But my worries were not over. It was all right that the order was written by hand on the face of the application. But if it was not sent by telegram and post the same day, the Dhenkanal Police would take Harmohan away the next day as the relief of seven days would be over.

I went looking for the residence of Whitaker Sahib, the registrar of the High Court. When I finally reached there, his wife informed me that he was ill and could not come down from the first floor. She was kind enough to inform her husband about Wart's order though. He came down upon hearing it and was amazed that Wart had issued such an order at home. He instructed the eeputy registrar on the application itself to issue the order immediately by telegram and post. I went in search of the deputy registrar. He was a corpulent Bengali gentleman who was more interested in shooting off with his mouth than doing something concrete. He understood the importance of the order all right. But he tried giving me the impression that he was doing me a great favour. He wrote the telegram and the letter, signed them and handed them over to me to be delivered at the post office. I had my own axe to grind, and hence, I did the job even if I felt a bit annoyed. I heaved a sigh of relief upon sending the telegram and the letter, and returned to the residence of Gopal Babu. He was no less amazed to hear everything. I returned to Cuttack the same evening.

The situation at Cuttack was terrible. I heard that the magistrate and the jailor were troubled as they had been asked by name to show cause. They were also angry with me. They did not know that this was routine procedure in case of a *habeas corpus*. Both of them ran to the government advocate to draft a proper reply to the notice. There was always hope when matters got delayed. The congress and the *Praja Mandal* were happy that Harmohan had been spared impending death for the moment. No one thought about the length to which I had gone and the money I had spent to get the order.

The vacation of the High Court was over. Harris Sahib joined as the new Chief Justice. The date came up for hearing after about six months. I went from Cuttack. The congress and the Praja Mandal were greatly

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interested in the case. But Government Advocate Gajendra Prasad Das was present in court to oppose the case on behalf of the congress government. The first *habeas corpus* application of Patna High Court was heard in the court of the chief justice. Prominent lawyers like P.R. Das, Sir Sultan, B.C. Dey and others were present in the courtroom. I presented my statement very carefully. The point of contention was whether the arrest warrant issued by the Dhenkanal Kingdom could be quashed by the High Court. I returned to Cuttack after three days with only accolades from my colleagues. We got the news a few days later that the application had been turned down.

Another phase started when an appeal was filed in the Federal Court at Delhi. I had to spend a lot of money again. But I submitted the appeal and got a stay. The Statesman reported that it was the first criminal appeal in the Federal Court. The appeal would have been heard after a long time. At least a year would have passed. Harmohan would have been safe and secure as before.

But all my work was in vain. All my doggedness and obstinacy amounted to nothing. Harmohan made peace with the King of Dhenkanal without bothering to consult anyone. He applied to the Federal Court not to act on the appeal. He did not consider it necessary to say a word to me. Neither he nor anyone else from the *Praja Mandal* felt obliged to do so. I felt hurt. But I was happy that I had done my job to the best of my ability.

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# 'No' for the Fifth Time

The Constitution of the country was adopted from January 1950. It was provided therein that the monthly salary of a judge of a High Court would be three thousand five hundred rupees. Earlier, it was four thousand rupees. An effort had been made to fill in the vacant positions of judges in the High Courts before the constitution was adopted so they could avail the benefit of the old salary. One position was vacant in the Patna High Court. H.R. Meredith was the Chief Justice there in 1949. Orissa was under the jurisdiction of the Patna High Court until July 1948. Meredith wanted that the vacant position in the Patna High Court should be filled in by someone from the Cuttack Bar. He wrote a letter to Bira Kishore Ray, the Chief Justice of Orissa High Court, to suggest the name of a competent advocate. Bira Babu suggested the name of Gopal Chandra Das. Gopal Babu and Pitambar Babu practiced at the Patna High Court from the beginning. Gopal Babu came to Cuttack only after the Orissa High Court was established. Meredith Sahib was familiar with them and their work. He did not wish to nominate Gopal Babu, and hence, he wrote again to Bira Babu to suggest the name of another capable advocate. He also mentioned in the letter that, considering all aspects, my name could be suggested. The day his letter reached Cuttack, Bira Babu told his wife Latika Devi that I was going to Patna as a judge. Bira Babu's sweeper Hakim overheard the conversation and reported it to Banchhanidhi Mohapatra, a lawyer. Banchhanidhi Babu came to me to congratulate me. The next evening the Rajmata of Ranpur (Deputy Minister) had arranged a dinner for Mr. Thomas, a minister of Madras, at Cuttack Club. Bira Babu was there with his wife. I was there too. Latika Devi congratulated me there when a few people were present. She said that a letter had come

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from Patna suggesting my name and Bira Babu was going to recommend me for the position. She asked me if Bira Babu had discussed the matter with me. She was taken aback when I replied in the negative. For some reason Bira Babu did not send an answer to the letter. Meredith Sahib wrote another letter after a month referring to me. No answer was sent by Bira Babu. The year 1949 came to an end in the process and it was the second week of January 1950. Finally, Meredith sought an answer through a telegram. Bira Babu still remained quiet. Since I was connected with Orissa High Court, the consent of the Chief Justice of Orissa High Court was necessary to appoint me as a judge in Patna. Otherwise, Meredith could have done it himself. He waited for an answer from Cuttack till January 25, 1950, and finally informed Delhi over telephone that he was recommending the name of advocate B.N. Ray of Patna. Delhi confirmed the appointment on the morning of the $26^{th}$ and Meredith was authorised to administer the oath of office to him without he being examined by the medical board. B.N. Ray was not aware of anything. He had come to the court as on any other day. Meredith called him and told him about the appointment. He asked him to get ready for the oath taking ceremony. It was already past 12 in the noon by that time. The ceremony was over at 1 p.m. and B.N. Ray sat as a judge in the court after the midday recess. Naki Imam, the registrar, had to send the details about the oath taking ceremony to Delhi under his signature. He mentioned therein that the oath had been taken after 12 noon, i.e. in the afternoon. This nullified the purpose for which the appointment was being made in such a tearing hurry as the earlier salary of Rs. 4,000/- a month could not be paid to B.N. Ray. The chief minister of Bihar and the Chief Justice got a special permission from the authorities in Delhi that the oath would be assumed to have been administered in the forenoon even though it had actually taken place in the afternoon. The justification for this was provided by saying that the receipt of the news of confirmation of the appointment had been delayed. Incidents like confirmation of the appointment over telephone, taking oath without submitting oneself to the medical board for an examination and sanction of the old scale of pay by a special order were unprecedented in judicial circles. There is no other instance also where six months were wasted to receive a formal letter of recommendation and the person concerned getting disappointed at the last moment. I would have gone to Patna High Court in 1949. It got delayed by ten years. I saw Meredith's letters when I went to Patna as a judge. Earlier, I had only heard the story from him. He had been amazed at the silence of Bira Babu. B.N. Ray was an unassuming and religious man. He was a devotee of *Sri Ma* of

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Pondichery. He used to send one thousand rupees per month from his salary to the *aashram* at Pondichery. He had described his unexpected appointment in detail before me. He often said that he got the appointment indirectly through me. Till the end of his days, he believed that he became a judge of the High Court at the last moment by the grace of Sri Ma. He was also a judge for two years till his retirement after I became a judge.

This was the fifth 'no' for me after the post graduate scholarship, state scholarship, the job of the deputy magistrate and the position of the advocate general. Mercifully, God gave me enough strength to endure these setbacks. My feelings have been wounded. But I have not grieved over these for long. I have enjoyed watching destiny at work.

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# CHILDREN

We decided to hold the sacred thread ceremony of the youngest son Anu (Ananta) at Puri. We stayed in the house of Bhaskar Mohapatra of Calcutta on the beach. The ceremony was solemnised on a pandal made in his large garden. Gadadhar Ramanuj, the head of the Emar *Math*, recited Sanskrit slokas for a long time in the evening at the benediction to the delight of everyone. This had taken place in the summer vacation of 1949. Advertisement came out at the time for recruitment of apprentices in the army. It was a matter of pride to work in the armed forces of an independent country. Ordinarily, no one applied from Orissa. It had been decided that year to select apprentices after an examination of the Union Public Service Commission followed by a personal interview. I thought that one of my sons should join the armed forces. Basanta was studying I.Sc. An application was submitted when he agreed to the proposal. I took him to Calcutta for the written examination. He was the only applicant from Orissa. He cleared the examination and went to Meerut for the personal interview. He was selected to study for four years at Dehra Dun. My wife was always sad that he stayed outside from such a young age. He became a commissioned officer after four years. He joined the Third Cavalry and was promoted to the rank of a Major General. He has received the AVSM. He has received recognition and honour at the national level for his contribution to planning and organization of the armed forces. He was the first from Orissa to get the rank of a Major General. It's all God's grace.

My eldest son Pravat studied at the convent school and the Stewart School. Then he studied for two years at the college. He started an ultramodern shop at Mangalabag in Cuttack dealing with English books and magazines. He had held the first exhibition of English books in the

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Hall of Ravenshaw College with the support of Parija Saheb. The book shop gradually turned out to be a cultural hub of the town. He brought books needed by the colleges straight from the publishers in London, New York and Paris. I had been extremely pleased the day I saw the name of Pravat's shop (Pravat Kumar Mahapatra) on the cover of the parcel sent by the McGraw Hill Company of New York. I kept the cover with me as a memento. Pravat had run the book shop by himself with his own ideas just the way I had started practicing law without seeking anyone's help. I was proud of his progress. The book shop was shifted to Bhubaneswar when it became the capital city and the university was moved there. It ran smoothly there under Ananta's supervision. Pravat was interested in real estate and went to Calcutta to concentrate on that. He has achieved unprecedented success in the business because of his farsight and honesty. He has all along been a godfearing man. We are extremely happy with his reputation and affluence.

Anu (Ananta) passed B.A. and took training in the book business for some time. He was more interested in the theatre. He is a forerunner in studying and planning about it. He has shown his mettle in producing and directing a few films. He has received accolades for that too. He is a workaholic. He has sharp intellect and is impassionate. He takes the rough with the smooth in his stride. He has an empathetic bent of mind and goes out of his way to help other people. He has closed the book shop and is now running a travel agency called Travel Wings. His mother is always concerned about him as he had once suffered from smallpox. Ranganath (son-in-law) passed M.A. and LL.M. from Allahabad and secured the first position in First Class. He started practicing law in Orissa High Court in 1950. He has achieved enormous success in the profession because of his qualifications, efficiency and humility to become a judge and the Chief Justice in the High Court, and later became a judge in the Supreme Court with effect from 1983 April. He is the first Oriya judge of the Supreme Court. He is deeply religious in nature.

The younger son-in-law Gourishankar (Acharya) is an associate professor in the medical college. He has received special training in London for a year in Oncology (treatment of Cancer) and is placed as a specialist in the cancer institute at Cuttack. He neglected to maintain a balance between his health and profession as a result of which his health failed causing concern to everyone around him. He has recovered after treatment and surgery at London and is busy in his work.

We were three brothers and four sisters. Krushna, the middle brother, committed suicide while studying I.Sc. My younger sister Khetramani

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died of cholera in her in-laws' house a few days after marriage while I was appearing at the matriculation examination at Purulia. My youngest brother Tinu (Sarat Chandra) completed his studies from Banpur School and Puri Zilla School and looked after the landed property in the village. He set up cottage industries like rice huller and *chuda* mill for the first time in the village to be an example for others. His three sons are engaged in their individual businesses. His only daughter has been married off to an executive engineer.

My sister Taramani had married Dr. Shankar Dash, the younger brother of the Acharya, a few months after I started practicing law. The Acharya, Pandit Lingaraj Mishra, Madanmohan Mishra and others had come in the *baraat.* I had to take care of the expenses of the family from that day onwards. To our misfortune, Shankar passed away prematurely as he was getting established as a medical practitioner. My parents broke down when Tara became a widow. Her two sons turned out to be capable persons and the five daughters have been married off. Younger sister Kanakalata is the wife of Choudhury Shyam Sundar Dash of Bhingarpur. He is managing his household with difficulty after the abolition of zemindari. Her eldest son is missing for a long time. The other two children are often ill. The two younger sons are engaged in government jobs and help run the family. The daughters have been married off. My youngest sister Hemalata is the eldest daughter-in-law of Purnachandra Rath Baidyaratna, the famous kabiraj of Puri. Her husband is a doctor. Her husband passed away recently. Her three sons are engaged in their professions. The youngest son is engaged in research in Benaras Hindu University. The daughters have been given in descent marriages.

A proposal came from Godavarish Babu for Pravat about Manorama, the youngest daughter of Biswambhar Praharaj of Baliabedha in Midnapore. She was the daughter of Godavarish Babu's daughter. We agreed. The marriage was solemnised at Baliabedha in May 1951. My father, brothers and friends had attended the marriage.

Before I looked for a husband for Bichitra (Nini), Late Baidyaraj Balunkeswar Acharya's son Kabiraj Laxminarayan Acharya sent a proposal for his eldest son Gourishankar. Laxminarayan was the son-in-law of Pandit Lingaraj Mishra. We knew the family since the days of Balunkeswar Acharya. The alliance was settled there.

Basanta proposed to marry Shakti, the middle daughter of Priyanath Samadar, our neighbour, who worked in the Governor's Secretariat. They were brahmins but they belonged to Bengal. The father of the girl opposed the alliance in the beginning. The mother of the girl came to our house

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one day. She went inside the prayer room and said that they had no objection to the marriage. That came to pass. Basanta and Nini (my daughter) married on the same day in 1961 March. Shakti was Nini's classmate from school. My wife had no hesitation in accepting a Bengali girl as her daughter-in-law.

Ananta told his mother that he wished to marry Sanjukta, the middle daughter of Dr. David R.N. Sahu. They were Christians. I was amazed to see that my wife had neither any objection nor disappointment. Father was unhappy with the alliance. The same was the case with my younger brother. The people from the village disapproved of the marriage. Neither I nor Baby had any objection. The bride was otherwise suitable. There was only a difference in religion. Father gave his permission with a lot of reservations. The grandfather of the bride objected to the marriage. The parents of the bride were also none too pleased. They could not go against the wish of their daughter. But they did not have the courage to arrange the marriage openly. My friend Sarat's wife Shanti was the classmate of the father of the bride. It was decided that the bride would come to their house at Kathgada Sahi and we would go there with the baraat for the registration of the marriage. The parents of the bride did not come there. I called Pandit Baman Acharya, our family priest, from the village by sending a telegram. He came but he demanded one thousand rupees to act as the priest. I considered it to be extortion. I did not yield to his demands. I took another priest to Sarat's house. After the registration of the marriage was over, I got them married according to the Hindu rites before the holy fire. My eldest son Pravat propped me up all throughout with his gaiety, enthusiasm and courage. My younger brother had not come. Father and mother arrived in the evening. My wife embraced the son and the daughter-in-law and took them home without any reservation whatsoever. Baman Acharya came to my wife the day after the marriage. He volunteered to perform the puja scheduled to be held on the fourth day after the marriage. He had never thought that I would ignore him altogether and get the marriage solemnised through another priest. It's one thing to refuse to act as a priest when the bride was Christian. But demanding ten times the usual fees was an unpardonable sin. He performed the duties of the priest on the fourth day.

There has been no deviation in the puja schedules of my wife. There has never been any problem in dining together with the daughters-in-law. Her love of mankind and strong faith in God has been reflected in everything she has done.

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# Civil Liberty Conference

The Defence of India Act was in force during the Second World War (1939–45). It also remained in force after the war. Fearless speakers were often threatened that the provisions of the act would be used against them just as actions were taken against the guilty. We had formed the Civil Liberty Union to boost the morale of the people as well as to help those who had been wrongly accused. Shyamsundar Mishra, Muralidhar Mohanty, Dinabandhu Sahu and others had joined the union. I was the president. The Union was active even after Harekrushna Mahtab formed the ministry on April 23, 1946. The movement had also spread to several other places in Orissa. It was decided to hold the Orissa Civil Liberty Conference in Nari Sangha Sadan of Cuttack. We got Barrister P.R. Das (brother of Deshabandhu Chitta Ranjan Das) as the president. Mahtab Babu not only considered this to be anti-government and tried to frustrate our efforts; he also started writing articles in his newspaper '*The Prajatantra*' condemning the conference. Personal aspersions had been cast on me in two leading articles. Chintamani Mishra was associated with 'The Prajatantra' at the time. Mahtab Babu shifted the blame unto Chintamani Mishra when a gentleman asked him about the propriety of such articles. Chintamani Babu had come to me that evening and told me who the real culprit was. Muralidhar Mohanty had gone to invite the Chief Minister personally after an invitation card was sent to him. Mahtab Babu later said that he knew nothing about the conference and that he had not received any invitation. P.R. Das arrived in a saloon car of Puri

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Express on the morning of the scheduled date and was given a warm welcome by a large number of people at the Cuttack railway station. Delegates had come from all over Orissa to participate in the conference. The conference was held for two days with a great deal of success. Narasimham had come on the first day from among the judges of the High Court. I had arranged a dinner for about a hundred people in my residence on the first day in honour of P.R. Das as also Mrs. Sen who had accompanied him. Professors, high-ranking officials, senior advocates, two I.A.S. officers and delegates from far-off places had joined the dinner. Pandit Lingaraj Mishra (minister) and Radhanath Rath had also come. Mahtab Babu did not come. The proceedings of the conference had been carried in the newspapers published from Calcutta. The Orissa Legislative Assembly was in session at that time. A few legislators alleged in the assembly that the government had opposed the conference in stead of supporting it. Deputy Minister Bhairab Chandra Mahanti countered it by saying that Harihar Mahapatra could not have given a dinner for a hundred persons in honour of P.R. Das if the government had opposed the conference. Mahtab Babu had a special quality. He never bore a grudge against anyone after an event had taken place. He would continue to remain as cordial as ever.

Mahtab became a minister at the centre and Nabakrushna Choudhury became the Chief Minister with effect from May 12, 1950. I had received the hospitality of Mahtab Babu when I had to go to Delhi in connection with the case of medical examination results of Utkal University in the Supreme Court. Mahtab had accompanied me to Buxi Tekchand, retired judge and senior advocate at the Supreme Court, when I had gone to consult the latter. Mahtab had stayed with us for more than an hour. He had lent me one thousand rupees when I did not have enough money with me to take care of the expenses at the Supreme Court. He had expressed his regrets one evening at the articles carried in '*The Prajatantra*' casting aspersions on me as we sat and chatted on his verandah. I kept quiet.

I received the news of the death of Tripathy Saheb (Shyamachandra Tripathy) by a heart attack on August 8, 1951 at Cuttack over telephone. He was the Chairman of the Rajasthan Public Service Commission and he lived at Jaipur at the time. I took his son Nilamani with me and flew to Delhi. Mahtab Babu had sent a car to the airport and taken us to his residence. He had arranged a car for us the next morning to take us to Jaipur. The funeral rites were carried out at Jaipur. We returned to Delhi and spent the night in the residence of Mahtab Babu. We returned to

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Cuttack via Calcutta. Mahtab Babu's affection and consolations had given us a lot of confidence. V. John, former English Professor of Ravenshaw College and the then Vice Chancellor of Rajasthan University, had consoled Nilamani after the pyre was lit on the cremation ground. Bhubanananda Das, Biswanath Dash and others had come to the residence of Mahtab Babu to console Nilamani.

I have never again noticed the antagonism of Mahtab Babu after the Civil Liberty Conference. Political difference need not necessarily lead to personal animosity.

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# THE STRANGE *THAKURA*

I had purchased a plot of land in Puri near the sea. The *puja* was performed on the morning of June 21, 1954 to start the construction of a house. Pandit Narahari Mishra, a priest from Jagannath Ballav, had come for the purpose. Father initiated the *puja*. The High Court was closed at the time because of the summer vacation. We stayed in a rented house in Puri. We returned to Cuttack when the High Court opened. Father lived in the village. Narasingha, the mason from Markanda Sahi, was in charge of the construction of the house. I used to go to Puri every Sunday to supervise the work. The housewarming *puja* was performed by Pandit Baman Acharya after the construction was over. Father was happy that we had a house at Puri. Who knew that he would breathe his last in that house?

We went to Puri during the holidays. At other times, the house remained locked. We went to have a *darshan* of Lord Jagannath and to partake of the *mahaprasad* whenever we went to Puri. We also went often to the beach. We enjoyed the sea breeze sitting on our verandah. In one of our visits to Puri we could not make it to the temple. Father came from the village the next day. We could not go to the temple as a few people arrived from the village in the evening. We had to return to Cuttack before the next evening. We went to the temple ordinarily in the evenings. My wife offered flowers and lit lamps in the temples of Bimala, Laxmi and Jagannath. The people who sold flowers surrounded her whenever they saw her in the temple premises. She bought lots of flowers from them. Gangu Das, the priest, always accompanied us to the temple. He filled large pots with ghee and brought them to her. Basketfuls of *bhog* were ordered. My wife spent money freely for these things. She derived a great

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deal of pleasure out of it. She had been cutting vegetables in the kitchen on the morning we had to return to Cuttack and shedding tears silently as she had not been able to go to the temple. The cook was cooking rice on the hearth. He had kept a brick on one side of the hearth to place the rice pot as the opening of the hearth was large. My wife turned around to look at the burning hearth and saw a shadowy shape on one side of the brick placed on the hearth. She asked the cook to remove the piece of brick. She put the piece of brick in the open shelf of the kitchen when she returned to Cuttack in the afternoon.

On her next visit to Puri after a few days, she discovered the shape of two eyes on the brick. She allowed the brick to stay where it was and returned to Cuttack. We saw the shape of a face on the brick on our next visit. No one had said anything to me earlier. It was the first time I saw the shape on the brick. I was stunned. God had been extremely kind to my wife. We carried the brick to Cuttack and worshipped it thereafter.

Pandit Maheswar Mishra of Benaras, the son-in-law of my aunt who belonged to the family of the priests to the royal family of Khallikote, had very unexpectedly placed three brass images of Rama, Laxman and Sita in our *puja* room earlier when the construction of my house at Chandni Chowk was completed. We had been overwhelmed that the gods had manifested themselves on their own and we sought their blessings ever after. My wife used to write 'Sri Ram' in sandalwood paste on one hundred and eight basil leaves from her childhood on the direction of her grandmother and offer them at the feet of Sri Ram. She had done it every day until her marriage. She always expressed her gratitude that Sri Ram had come to her on His own volition. She has been performing the Sri Ram Navami puja for nine days every year from those days. Now she was gratified to see the form of Lord Jagannath on the broken brick from top of the burning hearth. The shape became clearer gradually and the eyes, face and nose of the Lord started appearing on the other sides of the brick. We had carried the strange Thakura (deity) with us when we went to Patna. The Swami Maharaj of the Goudiya *Math* of Calcutta, who was old and in broken health, had been lifted to the first floor of the house on a chair to have a darshan of Thakura. He sat there for more than an hour oblivious of the surrounding. Swami Mohanananda Maharaj came to Patna once a year on the invitation of his disciples. The *kirtans* performed by him enthralled audiences. He too had come for a darshan. He wanted to touch the image. He held it in his hands and sat overcome with emotions for a long time. As he left, he said that the formation was strange

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indeed. He came to Puri to see the car festival at intervals. He asked about the brick god when we went to him to pay our respects. A sadhu with matted locks clad in sack cloth had come a few times to worship the brick god. The *maharaj* of Ayodhya, who has established the Pancha Mandir on the Serpentine Road of Patna, always came for a darshan when he was in Patna. Many ladies came and sang the Ramdhun before the deity. The wife of Gajendra Prasad Das took a leading role in the singing.

A man had once come from Mysore to sell some images made of ivory and other assorted things. He had come to our house and gave us a beautiful image of Krishna without taking any money. Sri Ram had come, Jagannath also came. Now Sri Krishna also arrived.

The sacred thread ceremony of Ranganath's son Devanand was performed on the Srigundicha Day at Banpur in 1962. Father, mother and I left for Banpur early in the morning. My wife said that she would join us later. She arrived at Banpur at around five thirty in the evening. She said that another strange incident was waiting for us at Cuttack. We returned in the night. A gentleman from Bihar had sent us a large piece of sandalwood. My wife thought that it would be easier to prepare sandalwood paste if the piece of wood was cut in two pieces. As she was about to cut the piece of wood with a chopper, she discovered eyes and nose in one part of the wood. The piece of wood had come by parcel. We had opened the parcel about fifteen days back and kept the piece of wood in the *puja* room. In stead of cutting the wood, she placed it on a pedestal in the *puja* room. The face began to appear gradually. The piece of wood is being worshipped since then.

All these go to show the Lord's blessing for us.

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# MINOR SCHOOL IN THE VILLAGE

Father was the first person in the village to take up a job with the government. He had walked all the way to Cuttack to enrol in the Normal Training School. Madhusudan Rao, Chandramohan Moharana and others were his teachers. Father often talked about their caliber and greatness. There was an upper primary school in the village. A minor school was needed. I donated some money and the Kashinath M.E. School was established after the name of my father. Father was extremely pleased. Gangadhar, the eldest son of the elder brother of father, became the president. He was a lawyer at Puri. High school classes have started now. Upper primary, middle school and high school should run independent of each other. It was natural that I should wish to donate some money for the high school. I considered it my duty to do so. We have our roots in the village after all. One hopes that this is not forgotten by anyone. There is a lot of change now in the village from our childhood days. No one wears a dhoti now as was the custom thirty years ago. Every one wears a full pant or a pajama. Eggs are part of normal diet and there is no bar for them from entering the homes. Everyone drinks tea. It's not uncommon to see cigarette packets and matchboxes in the trouser pockets of the common people. But the brahmins have not taken as yet to ploughing the fields. Many people in the village have been educated. Everyone wants to take up a service. I often try to help them out to find a job. No one is willing to work as a teacher in the village school. Lame excuses are made to avoid it. There is a library in the middle of the village. It receives some financial help from

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the government. My wife has helped build a *pucca* well and a cemented floor near the Mahadev Temple on the eastern end of the village.

The farmers of village Panibhandara moved the carriage of Lord Gopinath, the presiding deity of our village, on their shoulders during festivals. This had been the practice since ages. The Goddess Thanapati is worshipped in their village. The *Durga Puja* is celebrated for sixteen days in our village temple only after the Goddess accords her permission to initiate the puja through an *agyanmala*. An *agyanmala* is a garland of flowers that comes from a god or goddess as a formal permission to initiate an auspicious work. Lord Gopinath owns the large pond in Panibhandara. The people of the village use the pond. Coconut trees were planted on the four sides of the pond. Trouble started when coconuts began to grow. The point of contention was who would take the coconuts. The farmers wanted the coconuts for themselves. The brahmins insisted that they should come to the temple. It was not as if there were a lot of coconuts. The people of Panibhandar stuck to their guns and refused to bear the carriage of Lord Gopinath. The brahmins could shoot off with their mouths. But their shoulders were weak. They kept half of the carriage on a bullock cart and pulled the cart by hand to move Lord Gopinath from one place to another. The farmers locked the temple of the goddess as the carriage reached there to collect the *agyanmala*. The police had to come to maintain law and order. A law suit continued for four long years between the two parties. I had once gone to Panibhandar to find a compromise solution. But nothing came out of it. Both the parties had come to me about eight to ten times. A compromise has been struck recently. Lord Gopinath now sits in the carriage on the shoulders of the farmers. He is believed to be partaking of *bhog* from the houses of the Brahmins sitting outside in the carriage. There are bicycles, torches and radios in every house of Panibhandar. Their children attend school in our village. They sit as equals to the other children in the classrooms. Why would their fathers and brothers kowtow to others? Let the brahmins and the farmers bear the carriage on their shoulders together or in turn. Let them fix wheels to the carriage. Who cares?

Of late, the people of Panibhandar are gradually developing an interest in the school. I want to offer a few monthly scholarships to the students of the school. More children from that village could attend school as a result. Earlier, secondary villages were linked to a major village through temples and gods. This could be achieved now through schools.

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# Praharaj Murder Case

Gopal Chandra Praharaj, who had compiled the Purnachandra Bhashakosha (dictionary), practiced law. He is considered to be a pioneer in introducing a new style in Oriya prose writing. The serial 'Father's Bag' written by him and published in the 'Utkal Sahitya' set a new trend in this field. His other literary creations are also considered to be classics in Oriya literature. He sent for me one morning. He was sitting on a mat on the floor surrounded by books and notes. He beckoned me to sit and extended a five rupee note towards me saying that it was a retainer. I was taken aback. He always talked non-stop. He said, "I am getting on with the years. I do not know about the shape of things to come. I have given this house to Pitambari. These are the relevant documents. My sons and grandsons might make trouble for her after I am gone. You must defend her if any of them files a case. I am paying you a nominal retainer of five rupees for the purpose. You must jot it down in your diary. I have also made out a will making Pitambari the sole beneficiary of the royalties connected with the Bhashakosha. Let my children take my house and landed property in the village." I noticed that he was greatly agitated. I returned the five rupee note to him. I promised him that I would help Pitambari if ever the need arose.

A few months later I heard one morning that Praharaj had passed away all of a sudden. I found that a crowd had gathered in his house when I went there. The police was also there. It was suspected that someone had put poison in his milk. Only Praharaj and his sister-in-law Pitambari lived in the house. The police arrested Pitambari on charges of murder and lodged a case. Praharaj had extracted a promise from me to defend Pitambari in a civil suit. I had to abide by that promise now in defending

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her in a criminal suit. She looked totally helpless at the time. She was used to living in luxury. All of a sudden, she had been arrested and sent to the jail pending trial.

Praharaj had married in Nuagaon, a village adjacent to my village. Lokanath Mishra, a lawyer and a zemindar of Puri, had married his daughter. Mishra later became a government advocate, member of the legislative assembly, and a Rai Bahadur. Lokanath Babu did not marry again after the untimely death of his wife. Praharaj's son Chandrashekhar did not make much headway in studies. There was no love lost between the father and the son. Praharaj belonged to Siddheswarpur, a village near Cuttack. He had considerable ancestral property in the village. But he had built the house at Cuttack from his earnings as a lawyer. He was a supporter of the British government all throughout which had conferred the title of Rai Bahadur on him. His sister-in-law Pitambari was a child widow and lived in the village. She came later to Cuttack to live in Praharaj's house. Praharaj often acknowledged that she had helped him compile the Bhashakosha. Pitambari accompanied him to places like Patna, Delhi and Calcutta. I had heard that his wife did not approve of all these and chose to live in Siddheswarpur. She died there. It was suspected that she too had been murdered. Praharaj claimed her ornaments as the husband and got possession of them. Lokanath Babu and his son had renounced claims on the ornaments of their own volition. Praharaj died suddenly under these circumstances even as he and Pitambari lived together in the house at Cuttack.

The initial trial against Pitambari was held in the magistrate court and the charge sheet was filed. The trial continued in the court of sessions judge Charuchandra Kuari for a long time. I had to manage things all by myself in all the courts. Pitambari did not have any money to engage another lawyer. My junior helped me out. No one seemed to be having any sympathy for Pitambari. People wondered who could have put poison in the milk. In the absence of any eyewitness and direct evidence, I tried to shift the suspicion unto various people through my cross-examination and argument. It was a sensational lawsuit of the time. Hundreds of people gathered in the courtroom to see Pitambari in the dock. Finally, Pitambari was acquitted. I thought about Praharaj and heaved a sigh of relief.

That was not the end of Pitambari's plight. Praharaj's sons and grandsons filed a civil suit in the sub judge court at Cuttack to claim the house at Cuttack given by him to Pitambari. Chintamani Acharya conducted the trial on their behalf. I had promised Praharaj that I would

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fight this case on behalf of Pitambari. The trial continued for a long time in the court of Sub Judge Gopabandhu Mishra. The contention of the plaintiffs was that the house at Cuttack had been built from inherited funds and Praharaj, on his own, did not have the right to will it in favour of someone. The list of expenditures relating to the construction of the house prepared by Praharaj in his own handwriting, his earnings as a lawyer, receipts of municipal taxes paid by him, etc. were submitted to establish the claims of Pitambari. The case was dismissed. Praharaj's sons and grandsons appealed against the verdict in the High Court. Sand had come from the Kathjodi River for the construction of the house. The Praharaj family, as zemindars, had some rights over the river, even if negligible. Thus, some earnings of the common undivided property had been spent for the construction of the house. This was the contention of the plaintiffs and the High Court granted the appeal on this ground. Pitambari was not willing to appeal against the verdict in the superior court. I was sure that the verdict of the High Court would have been set aside on appeal. I had heard that she hoped for a compromise with the sons and grandsons, and hence refrained from making an appeal. But she was disappointed. She spends her days now in a pitiable condition.

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# Bail at Midnight

The *Mahanta* of Gopaljee Math in Cuttack had considerable cultivable land in Salipur. The police arrested him intentionally one day after evening and brought him to the Lalbagh police station when he had some altercations with the farmers who tilled his land. The charge was flimsy and the police could have released him. Alternately, he might have been arrested during the daytime and produced before the magistrate court. The police had intentionally arrested him after evening so he would be compelled to spend the night in the lock-up and the police would take him to the court the next day at its leisure. The objective was to harass and humiliate the *Mahanta.* His supporters appealed to the police to release him on bail. The police did not say no to them but did not do anything. Finally, they said at ten in the evening that bail could not be granted. The supporters of the *Mahanta* came to me. I enquired about the matter over telephone. The police said that D.S.P. Srikanta Ghosh had instructed them not to release the accused on bail. When I asked Ghosh he lied that he did not know anything and the officer-in-charge was to decide whether bail would be granted or not. I could not get the S.P on the telephone. It was 11 p.m. by the time I prepared the bail application. I prepared one set of application for the S.D.O., another for the sessions judge in case the S.D.O. turned it down, and the third one for the High Court Judge. The circuit court was being held at Cuttack at the time. I took all the sets to the residence of S.D.O. Khan Saheb Musaheb Khan. It was midnight by then. His house was not far from the gate. I called him with a lot of hesitation. Someone answered after a while to enquire after the caller. We waited after I identified myself. Musaheb Khan knew me very well for a long time. I believed that he had a high opinion of me. He opened the door

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hurriedly and took me inside to ask what the matter was. After he heard everything, he said the bail would have been granted anyway in the court next day. I said I was looking for a way out from the whimsical order of a D.S.P. I also told him that I was carrying three sets of applications, and I would knock on three different doors one after another if necessary. He said that he had served as a magistrate for a long time but had never seen anyone in such a tearing hurry earlier. He said that since I had come to his house myself he had no option except to do the needful. He granted bail. I returned home at one in the morning after dropping the *Mahanta's* men near the police station. I heard that the Inspector of Police was amazed to see the order of the S.D.O. and woke up the D.S.P. from sleep in the dead of the night. The D.S.P. went berserk with anger. But he released the *Mahanta* immediately as he had no other choice. The matter became a hot topic of discussion in the court the next day. Everyone wondered how the bail was granted in the middle of the night. The D.S.P. must have learnt a lesson. But such people never betrayed their emotions in public.

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# Magistrate's Cigarette

I was the lawyer for the accused in a criminal case in the court of Bhabagrahi Mishra when he was the S.D.O. of Cuttack. Police Inspector Paramananda Mishra was the opposing counsel in the capacity of the court inspector. Arguments started after the examination of the witnesses. Paramananda Babu was a capable person. He took every case seriously. I began after Paramananda Babu finished with his arguments. Bhabagrahi Babu left the courtroom for some time when the Collector sent for him. We waited for him to return. He returned after about an hour with a cigarette dangling from his lips. I had heard earlier that he smoked at times even when a case was in progress. I had been amazed at such indiscretion considering the fact that he was a well-bred person. No magistrate would do such a thing if he did not have scant regard for the advocates. The lawyers and mukhtars were unhappy with his smoking while the court was in session. They criticized him at his back. I had never seen it myself. He sat on the magistrate's chair with the cigarette between his lips which he had lit on his way back from the collector. I had to start my argument. When he saw me sitting quietly on my chair, he glanced at me and said, "Please continue." He repeated the words when I still remained seated. I answered, "I shall do so after you finish enjoying your smoke." His face coloured. He threw the cigarette away immediately and lowered his face. I felt bad when I saw his hurt face. I did not say anything else on the matter and proceeded with my argument. Bhabagrahi Babu had not looked at me even once as long as the case was in progress. I returned home after the hearing was over. Bhabagrahi Babu would also have returned to his home after finishing his other chores in the court. As I was busy in work in my residential office in the evening, I found

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Bhabagrahi Babu standing outside my office room. I stood up to escort him to the drawing room. He blurted out, "You sure gave it to me today in the courtroom." I held him by the hand and led him to the drawing room. I apologized to him for having hurt him. I tried to explain it to him that I would have looked small in the eyes of the other lawyers present in the courtroom if I had continued with my argument while he was smoking. Other lawyers were unhappy with his smoking when a case was in progress. But no one dared tell him anything for fear that he would take offense. Lawyers who practiced regularly in his court would naturally hesitate to cross swords with him. Bhabagrahi Babu realized his transgression and said repeatedly that he had learnt a lesson that day. However, he asked me why I chose to slight him in the court in front of everyone in stead of telling it to him privately. I explained that I would have done so had he not repeatedly asked me to continue with my argument even as he continued smoking. He understood. Our cordial relations continued as before because of his generousness.

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# Barrister's Impropriety

The Raja (zemindar) of Madhupur took a leading part in the integration of the princely states. He had been elected a member of the Bihar-Orissa Council. I knew him while working in the area of public life. His law agent came to me to engage my services in a case. I appealed on his behalf in the High Court. The primary hearing took place in the court of Babu Jagannath Das, Judge. He had the habit of examining everything minutely during the primary hearing. Half a day was spent in the exercise. The appeal was admitted. The Raja of Madhupur came to my house in the evening to express his satisfaction. The appeal was listed in the court of Jagannath Das for the final hearing. I went to the court preparing myself to the best of my ability. I discovered in the court that Barrister A.N. Ray from Calcutta had come to appear on behalf of the Raja. The appeal did not come up for hearing that day. A.N. Ray discussed the case with me that day outside the courtroom. He told me the next day in the court corridor that the client had asked him to conduct the argument. I said that was okay by me and I went to another court. He was slightly junior to me. I should have conducted the argument as per the traditions of the court. He wanted to assert himself as he had come from Calcutta and he was a barrister. The court would not have allowed him to conduct the argument if I were present in the courtroom. He could also have done it if I would have withdrawn myself from the case voluntarily or as per the client's wish. I did not want to make an issue of it. Hence, I decided not to be present in the courtroom during the conduct of the case. When A.N. Ray stood up for the argument, Judge Jagannath Das enquired why I was not present in the court. Ray answered that I was busy elsewhere. Das said that the case would be taken up when I presented

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myself. A.N. Ray was perturbed and came to me. He requested me to come to the court. I refused to oblige him and I could see that he was anguished. Opposing Counsel Banchhanidhi Mohapatra informed the judge about the cause of my absence when the case came up in the court again. The judge mildly reprimanded A.N. Ray by saying that it was improper on his part not to bring someone along who had been conducting the case from the beginning. Anyway, Ray's argument was heard. I returned the fees I had received for the hearing of the case to the Raja of Madhupur the same day. He sent his manager to me in the evening. But I had not considered it proper to accept the fees. Ray and the Raja remembered the incident for a long time. The Raja came to me after a few days to express his regrets and begged forgiveness. He also requested that I should continue to be his lawyer in the other cases. I agreed to do so. He was elder to me in age and a respectable person. He was not aware that he was committing a *faux pas* by engaging A.N. Ray to plead his case.

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# Raja's Displeasure

I handled a few cases of the raja of Kanika. Other lawyers handled his cases in the lower courts. His law agent used to consult me often about these cases. A case relating to municipality election was filed by Shailendra Narayan Bhanja Deo, the eldest son of the raja, against Motilal Pandit. This was before the High Court was established in Orissa. Banchhanidhi Mohapatra was the counsel for Pandit while I was the lawyer for the raja's son. We had opposed the election of Pandit. We appealed in the court of H. Lall, I.C.S., the election officer of Cuttack, not to notify the results of the election. But we failed. I went to Patna to get a stay order. Banchhanidhi Babu also went to Patna when he came to know that we were going there. Mahavir Prasad, the advocate general of the Patna High Court, was engaged by us. Prasad, I and barrister Muralidhar Mohanty went to file an application in the court. Mahavir Prasad said that he had not been given enough time to be acquainted with the facts of the case. He asked me to make the opening statement relating to the case as I was familiar with it from the beginning. I did so. The court granted a stay. Banchhanidhi Babu arrived at the court along with barrister P.R. Das as we were coming down the staircase. P.R. Das insisted that the court should call us again for a reconsideration of the stay order. But he was told that it could be done only if I agreed to such a proposal. He was also given the alternative of submitting an application for the annulment of the stay order. If the application was admitted after the primary hearing, it could be listed for a final hearing after sufficient time and notice was given to the opposition. The court ruled that the stay order could not be modified without my consent since the matter had already been disposed of. P.R. Das and Banchhanidhi Babu returned disappointed. Banchhanidhi Babu told me

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good-naturedly on our return to Cuttack, "So you pulled a fast one on us?" When I smiled back at him, he continued, "You were too quick for us. We took so much trouble for nothing." Banchhanidhi Babu was a warm-hearted and honest man. He was always kind towards me.

I had informed the raja of Kanika about the stay order through a telegram from Patna. On getting the telegram, he thought that the case had been finally disposed of and he had won the case. He had sent a car to the railway station to take me to his house on my return to Cuttack. I made excuses and came to my house. The election was over. But the results would not be published until after the disposal of the case. Motilal Babu was anguished that his lawyer did not get an opportunity to speak in court although a lot of money had been spent in the process. The raja's law agent came in the evening to take me to the palace for a discussion with the Raja. I said humbly, "It is improper on the part of an advocate to go to the client's house for a discussion. I have regard and gratitude for the Raja. But I could not go to his house for consultation. Would a lawyer have come to the raja's house if he were from Patna or Calcutta? Was I not being taken for granted just because I happened to be from Cuttack?" The agent went back and said something to the raja which displeased him a great deal. The law agent reported the displeasure of the raja to me with a great deal of embellishment and told me indirectly that the raja might relieve me from the case. He advised me to visit the raja at least once when I made no reply. I said, "Why once? I could go a hundred times. Have I not visited the raja earlier? But I cannot go to him for consultation whether I continue with the case or not." The raja was an intelligent and experienced person. He was extremely fond of me from my college days. He was willing and ready to help me at all times. He felt offended when I sent word through the law agent that I could not go to him for consultations. It was natural that he would be displeased. But he must have realized my limitations. He never raised the matter again. He never gave any indication either that he was likely to end our relationship as a lawyer and a client. But it was apparent for a long time that he had not altogether forgiven me.

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# The First Mining Case of Orissa

Bhagabat Mohanty took a degree in engineering and opted to work as a civil contractor instead of taking up a job. His friend Samuel Sahu also did the same thing. They were the first engineer-contractors of Orissa. I do not know anything about Samuel's business. But Bhagabat Babu used to visit me often. He was short, honest and a man who did not mince his words. He would never allow anyone to cheat a dime out of him. He knew that there was more money in chromite mines than in civil construction, and hence, he concentrated on the mining business. Sirajuddin was a renowned mining contractor of Keonjhar. He had taken mines on lease from the king. He used to extract chromite ores from the mines and export those to earn a huge profit. He had the temperament of a *Badshah*. His house was on the road from Keonjhar to Chaibasa. He had never been to school. He had started his life as an itinerant vendor carrying assorted things on the back of a donkey. He conducted himself like a hindu although he was a muslim. Goddess *Laxmi* smiled upon him and he became a millionaire within a short time. Everyone including kings, ministers, political agents and clerks was in his pocket. Bhagabat Babu entered into the mining business as his partner with the concurrence of the king. However, they fell out at the time of the integration of the princely states. Bansidhar Patnaik of Keonjhargarh had joined Bhagabat Babu in the same business. There was a dispute between the two parties with regard to the possession of the mines. Bhagabat Babu and Bansi Babu consulted me. Several days passed in examining the documents. I prepared the appeal. We went to Sir Tejbahadur Sapru, the eminent lawyer of

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Allahabad, to get the appeal revised wherever necessary. He was slightly ill. He agreed to see us as we had travelled a long distance to see him. He looked at the appeal superficially and said that it was all right. He did not want to get into the complexities of the case. He chatted with me for some time while smoking hookah on an armchair. We thought that our money and trouble were wasted. Bhagabat Babu and I had gone by plane from Calcutta to Allahabad. It was my first trip by air. Bharat Airways used to operate flights at the time. The passengers were weighed. Luggage is weighed everywhere anyway. We returned by train. A civil suit was filed in the Munsif Court in Anandpur. It was the first mining case in Orissa. Sirajuddin had brought lawyers from Chaibasa. We went from Cuttack. Sirajuddin was present. He had a devil-may-care attitude. He was offering cigarettes and *paans* to everyone including Bhagabat Babu and Bansi Babu. I never had a share in anything as I was addicted to neither. The case continued in the court of Munsif Brajasundar Das for a long time. The lawyers of the two sides fought with each other in the court. But there was no discord in the least between the plaintiff and the defendant. There was only one lawyer on our side. But Sirajuddin always came with three to four lawyers. He spent money like water. We were circumspect when it came to spending money. We won the case. Sirajuddin filed an appeal in the sub judge court of Keonjhargarh. Raja Iyer, advocate general of Madras, and Narsuraju of Hyderabad (who later became the Advocate General of Andhra) had come to file the appeal on behalf of Sirajuddin. Three lawyers of Chaibasa accompanied them. They wanted to take a stay order on the possession after filing the appeal. Therefore, Bhagabat Babu had taken me along with him. Sirajuddin was extremely pleased with himself that he had been able to assemble a galaxy of eminent lawyers from different places. Either he did not understand anything about the case or was not able to do so. He enjoyed a good fight. Our objection was sustained and the court ruled that no party was to be dispossessed until after the disposal of the case.

The appeal was heard in the court of sub judge Gatikrushna Mishra. Gati Babu resigned from service later to become an advocate. He became a judge and the chief justice of Orissa High Court, and retired gracefully. There was a crowd in the court to see eminent lawyers like Raja Iyer and Narsuraju. Raja Iyer was short like me. But he was extremely efficient, dedicated, gentle and decent. He looked at his left instead of looking at the judge while arguing in the court. He had shown neither any bitterness nor made any sarcastic comment about the opposing counsel in the five days of argument. As far as I can remember, that was perhaps the only case where

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there was no unpleasant exchange of words between the two sides or their lawyers either inside or outside the courtroom. Several days later, a lengthy judgment was given accepting our demands.

Sirajuddin went to Patna after that. He took Gopal Chandra Das from Cuttack to meet Barrister Manoharlal who had retired as a judge of the Patna High Court. He brought him to Cuttack to file an appeal in the Orissa High Court. It was slightly more difficult as it was a second appeal. The brilliant Manoharlal advised Sirajuddin to make a compromise with Bhagabat Babu and Bansi Babu. Justice Narasimham had commented in the court that the judgment given by Gati Babu was commendable. The two sides initiated compromise talks between them. Sirajuddin was a large-hearted person. Bhagabat Babu was also a clever man. It was agreed that Bhagabat Babu and Bansi Babu would renounce all rights to the mines in exchange of three lakh rupees. Three lakh rupees those days would be the equivalent to thirty lakh rupees today. Bhagabat Babu perhaps gave up the rights to the mines for the sake of ready cash. The compromise was filed in the court. I never saw Bhagabat Babu after that day. It was strange indeed. He owed me a lot of money towards my fees.

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# Monetary Help from Bombay

Floods occurred all the time in Orissa. Relief committees were formed in Cuttack to help the affected people whenever there was a flood. It was not possible on the part of the government those days to distribute relief to the distressed people on as large a scale as is done now. Non-government organizations were conspicuous by their absence. The Marwari Society of Calcutta used to provide some help. During the floods in 1934, it was decided that Laxminarayan Sahu, Shyamsundar Mishra and I would go to Bombay to get some monetary help for the floods. Both Sahu and Mishra were members of the Servants of India Society. Swami Bichitrananda Das was the president of the relief committee. I was the joint secretary. We went by train and stayed in the office of the Servants of India Society at Bombay. Amritlal Thakkar (Thakkar Bapa) was staying there. He was familiar with Orissa from the time of the flood in the Davara area of Puri in 1920–21. Mahatma Gandhi had sent him to Gopabandhu Babu (Pandit Gopabandhu Dash) to help the distressed people. He used to come often to Orissa after that and was affectionately addressed as Thakkar Bapa. It was my first visit to Bombay. I had no problem in managing with the modest lodging and boarding provided to us in the office of the Servants of India Society.

We had to finish our daily chores and wait with appeal papers and receipt books before Thakkar Bapa got up early in the morning and got ready. He was hard-working and talked little. I had a hard time in keeping pace with him when he walked. He took us to various businessmen and

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industrialists. We never returned from any place without getting something. It was an unprecedented experience to meet Sir Purushottam Das Thakur Das. He was an industrialist. He was just as rich as he was humble. He showed a great deal of respect and affection towards Thakkar Bapa, and asked us about the flood and the distribution of relief. He not only donated a handsome amount but also persuaded others to contribute generously. Everyone addressed him as Sir P.T. For the first time, I found a leading industrialist of the country to be so philanthropic. We moved around with Thakkar Bapa from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. everyday. He read a newspaper quietly after introducing us at a particular place. Laxminarayan Babu handed over the begging bowl to me at every place. Shyam Babu wrote out the receipts. At times, Thakkar Bappa telephoned the people and asked us to go and meet them. We had to find the places on our own. Notwithstanding the amount contributed, I saw no hesitation anywhere to help. No one ever enquired about the contributions made by others. The rich had no contempt for the poor. I noticed that almost everyone had earmarked some funds for such contributions. We were fairly busy for the seven days. We returned to Cuttack with a little more than thirty thousand rupees. Laxminarayan Babu published a short book of poems titled 'Journey to Bombay' on our return.

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# Protest against Rudeness

Babu Jagannath Das became the chief justice of the Orissa High Court after Birakishore Ray retired as the first chief justice. He was a congress supporter. He was always clad in a dhoti and wore a cap on his head. He believed that his conduct was impeccable. He found fault with everyone else. He started censuring the lawyers on their mode of conducting cases after he became the chief justice. An unpleasant situation took place in his court on January 8, 1953. Udayanath Rath was talking to some people in the corridor of the court. Jagannath Das ordered the police constable present in the court to call the person talking in the corridor. Udayanath Babu was asked to present himself before the chief justice. Jagannath Babu reprimanded him by saying that he was creating disturbance in the court premises. I was the secretary of the High Court Bar Association for a long time. I also held the post at that time. Satyanarayan Sengupta was the president of the Association. I called an emergency meeting of the association that afternoon to discuss the matter. Several advocates criticized the chief justice harshly for his deplorable behaviour. It was concluded that the rudeness shown to Udayanath Babu was tantamount to insulting the lawyers. I prepared a draft resolution accordingly and placed it in the meeting. The resolution was passed unanimously and I sent a copy of the same to the chief justice. The chief justice had never expected that something like this would happen. It was natural that he should get angry. There are always a few traitors in every place. Several people had criticized the chief justice harshly in the meeting of the Association. Two of them informed the chief justice that I had taken the leading role in convening the meeting and getting the resolution passed. The chief justice told me the names of the two persons later. It was

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natural on the part of the chief justice to get angry with me. I heard that evening that the chief justice would issue a notice of contempt of court to me and Satyanarayan Sengupta. I had heard that Justice Lingaraj Panigrahy supported him on his stand. Justice Narasimham had cautioned them not to take such hasty action without further deliberations. The lawyers were agitated. Pitambar Mishra was the advocate general at the time. He was with us even though he did not take an active part. On the instruction of chief minister Nabakrushna Choudhury, Pitambar Mishra came to my house twice to find a solution to the problem at hand. The chief justice wanted that the bar association should withdraw its resolution. This was discussed in his house in the presence of Pitambar Babu and me. He had been mortified in informing me at the time that two advocates had informed him that I was instrumental in convening the meeting and getting a resolution with such strong words passed in the meeting. He had also named the advocates. He was somewhat embarrassed when I showed him the minute book which revealed that those two gentlemen had taken part in the discussion to condemn the conduct of the chief justice. I had reminded him humbly that day that he himself was a congress worker and he would have known very well that the thoughts and wishes of others were expressed in words by one person. I had done that job as the secretary. I had no more personal animosity towards him than the others. Everyone had agreed with me. I also told him that it was impossible to withdraw the resolution of the Bar Association unilaterally. The chief justice took exception to the fact that the resolution had not only referred to the behaviour shown by him to Udayanath Rath but also had cast aspersion on his general conduct. He was slightly pacified when I told him that ancillary topics always came up for discussion when a major issue was deliberated upon. I suggested to him that he should call Udayanath Rath and express his regrets to him. I also advised him to write a letter to the bar association that he never intended to hurt the sentiments of the advocates in the courtroom. He did not commit anything. Pitambar Babu and I returned from his house. Five days later, on January 15, he wrote a long letter to the president of the Bar association and sent it to me. He pointed out the impropriety of the language used in the resolution of the bar association in his letter and went on to say that he had always tried to uphold the dignity of the court even though his language and conduct in the courtroom might appear rude in the process. He also added that he had always held the advocates in high esteem and would always continue to do so. He further said that he had discussed the matter with Udayanath Babu and explained to him that the

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unpleasant situation had taken place on the spur of the moment. He believed that Udayanath Babu had understood that he regretted the incident. It was quite obvious from the letter that he did not want to get down from his high horse. Besides, he had mentioned elsewhere in the letter that he had refrained from taking any action on the resolution of the bar council as he had less than six months for retirement. He tried to save his face without showing any grace. There was no possibility of either expressing our satisfaction with the letter or withdrawal of the resolution. The chief justice continued to sulk.

Rajendra Prasad, the President of India, had come to Cuttack a few days later. The chief justice arranged a meeting in the hall of the bar association to felicitate him. We had fully cooperated with him. We had not appreciated the remark of the chief justice during the course of his speech that he had worked as an obedient worker of Mahatma Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad during the congress movement. He got angry with us for this reason also. He was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court sometime later. Fazal Ali was the governor of Orissa at the time. I had heard from him later that Jagannath Das had gone to him and expressed his desire to resign after the resolution of the bar council. Fazal Ali had dissuaded him from doing so as his appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court was under consideration at the time.

There should have been a great deal of joy among the advocates that a Judge of the Orissa High Court was being promoted as a Judge of the Supreme Court for the first time. But everyone noticed and felt its absence. Jagannath Das himself too felt the same way. He had lost everyone's affection by using harsh words in the court. He had tried to get the resolution of the bar association withdrawn or modified through two advocates of Berhampur who had come to Cuttack. But he had not succeeded in his efforts. I was indirectly informed a few times that it could be done if I made some efforts in that direction. I ignored the overtures. Our friends from Berhampur were unhappy when I told them that the bar association could consider his proposal if he withdrew the last portion of his letter or if he wrote another letter to convey the same sense. They might have informed it to the chief justice. Be that as it may, Jagannath Das had shown no rudeness as a Judge of the Supreme Court. He had called me to his chamber and exchanged pleasantries when he heard once that I was in the Supreme Court in connection with a case. Venkatraman Iyer, another judge of the Supreme Court, was present when I visited him at his residence the next day. I had been embarrassed by the praises heaped

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on me by Jagannath Das in the presence of Iyer. For a while I wondered if we had shown even more rudeness in protesting against his rudeness at Cuttack. Neither he nor I had raised the matter.

It is the misfortune of the Orissa High Court that the farewell ceremony of Birakishore Ray, the first chief justice, had not been organized properly because of the non-cooperation of the other judges. A conducive atmosphere was missing because of his differences with the bar association when Jagannath Das, the second chief justice, left the High Court. Lingaraj Panigrahy became the third chief justice. No farewell ceremony had been held for him under even more painful circumstances.

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# Panigrahy's Anger

Lingaraj Panigrahy worked as a lawyer for some time in Aska and moved to Berhampur. He was tall, fair and handsome. He had a good command over English. He participated actively in the integration of the princely states. He was very successful as a lawyer in Berhampur. Telugu lawyers dominated Berhampur at the time. A few Oriya lawyers like Lingaraj Panigrahy, Madhusudan Panigrahy, Bhubaneswar Rath, Ramakrushna Rath, Dinabandhu Das, Gorachand Patnaik had been able to successfully compete with the Telugu lawyers. All these people also took an active part in the Utkal Sammilani. We knew them intimately in this connection. Lingaraj Panigrahy was my opposing counsel in the first case that I had to conduct in the court of the district judge at Berhampur. We had met each other for the first time in that place. Abhimanyu Babu, who had been trained by Lingaraj Babu as a junior, was my associate. He had cautioned me that Lingaraj Babu was an extremely crafty lawyer and that the white district judge held him in high esteem. I made our opening statement in the court very carefully and humbly. Lingaraj Babu responded by making certain sarcastic comments at me before putting forth his argument. Fortunately, the judge gave his verdict in favour of us immediately after the hearing. I had appeared in the court of district judge Ramalingam, I.C.S. of Ganjam-Puri at Puri in a criminal appeal filed against the *Mahanta* of the Uttaraparswa *Math* of Puri. Birakishore Ray and Lingaraj Panigrahy were counsels for the *Mahanta*. I do not know whether the judge appreciated my logical statement in the court or not. But it was quite obvious that Panigrahy did not appreciate it when Bira Babu openly commended my speech. Panigrahy came to Cuttack at times when the circuit bench of the Patna High Court came to Cuttack. He

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stayed in my house sometime too. He moved to Cuttack just before the High Court was established. He became the advocate general during the President's Rule. Later, he was appointed as one of the first four judges of the Orissa High Court. He had claimed that he was senior to Jagannath Das as he was the advocate general. But the Central Government held that Das was senior since he had practiced as an advocate for a longer period. Therefore, he became the Chief Justice after Jagannath Das.

Panigrahy enjoyed taking a dig at the people of Cuttack. He had the mistaken impression that the people of Cuttack did not like him. That idea might have changed somewhat after he moved to Cuttack and came in close contact with the people here. On the surface, he expressed his goodwill towards me. But he always tried to prop up the people from the south in friendly discussions. He was a tall man. He had a small Ford 10 car. I was a short man but I had a very long Pontiac car. He made fun of me by saying that the small man had a big car and the big man had a small car. He developed a personal animosity towards Bira Babu after he became a judge. Bira Babu had not kept any case for Panigrahy in the list the day he retired. Only a short list had been made for the day, and Bira Babu and Jagannath Das sat on the division bench. Das left the bench immediately after the list was over without waiting for the farewell ceremony to be held by the bar association. Bira Babu had no other option except to leave the place. He later came to the court alone. We extended a farewell to him on behalf of the bar. Both the parties looked very solemn and formal at the ceremony. We had been hurt by the conduct of the fellow judges on the day of Bira Babu's retirement. We had hoped to extend a warm farewell to the outgoing, first chief justice of the High Court in the presence of a full bench. A printed book written by an anonymous author slandering Bira Babu was making the round at the time. Several people were suspected to be behind it. An emergency meeting of the bar association had been convened and such a vile act had been condemned. I had considered it my duty as I was the secretary of the bar association. Panigrahy was angry with me as he believed that I had persuaded others to join me in convening the emergency meeting of the bar council for the purpose.

We tried to hold the Orissa Lawyers' Conference at Cuttack after Panigrahy became the chief justice. I was the secretary of the reception committee. We had decided to hold the conference in the hall of the bar association. Chief Justice Panigrahy was unwilling to accord permission for the same. He had earlier given permission to hold the meeting and dinner of the judicial officers in the hall, and was himself present there. I

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reminded him about it and asked him why an objection should be made now to hold the lawyers' conference there. He simply said that the two events could not be equated and kept quiet. I came to know later that he had been very angry with me as he had not been able to find a justifiable explanation. We held the conference at Nari Sangha Sadan. A resolution was placed before the conference expressing regret and protest that the hall of the bar association had not been made available for the conference. Senior Advocate Subbarao had brought forth the proposal. Panigrahy was angry as he suspected that it was my handiwork. He looked for ways to harm me in some way.

My practice had increased manifold by 1953–54. Other lawyer friends often engaged me in making argument in their cases. It was not mandatory to get a *vakalatnama* for such appointment. A memo of appearance was enough for that. Even without a memo of appearance, a senior advocate could make the argument if the original advocate who had received the vakalatnama was present in the courtroom. Madhusudan Mohanty had submitted a criminal revision after receiving the vakalatnama from a client. It was listed for admission in Panigrahy's court. Madhu Babu asked me to make the argument. Accordingly, I made the argument while Madhu Babu was present and the case had been admitted. Madhu Babu or his client had not given me any fee for the purpose. I had only done so to help Madhu Babu out. A few days aftter the case was admitted, Panigrahy made an allegation against me that I had violated the rules by arguing in a case without receiving a vakalatnama from the client. He set up a tribunal with three advocates to enquire into the allegation. Banchhanidhi Mohapatra was made its chairman. I had not been able to get any scent of this kind of a conspiracy being hatched against me. Panigrahy had taken enough care to keep everything under wraps. Everyone in the Bar was amazed and angry the day it became publicly known that such a conspiracy had been hatched to insult and censure me. Swami Bichitrananda Das came to me and asked me to accompany him to Panigrahy to ask him to retract the allegation. I countered him by saying that if I went to Panigrahy it would seem that I was begging his forgiveness especially when he had already made the allegation formally and set up a tribunal without bothering to consult senior advocates like him or trying to find the facts from me. I was extremely angry as my reputation was at stake. There was no such instance where an insignificant event had been magnified to such an extent for the sake of personal vendetta under the excuse of administrative impropriety. B.P. Singh, who became a judge and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court later, had described this event as a colossal

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misuse of the powers of the court while discussing it with Kanhaiya Singh and Anant Singh, two judges of the Patna High Court.

The tribunal sat to consider the allegation. Madhu Babu felt sorry for me as I was in trouble because of his case. He filed an affidavit with the tribunal voluntarily that he had first filed the revision petition after obtaining a vakalatnama from the client, and that I had made the argument on his request and in his presence on the day of the admission. As per the terms of the vakalatnama, he could seek the help of other lawyers if he considered it necessary. The tribunal concluded that the allegation was baseless in spite of all the machinations of Panigrahy. Legally, the decision of the tribunal should have come up for the consideration of the court. Panigrahy swept it under the carpet till he left the High Court. R.L. Narasimham became the Chief Justice after Panigrahy. The decision of the tribunal came up for consideration before a bench of three judges about a year after Narasimham took charge. The bench upheld the decision of the tribunal after expressing dissatisfaction over the fact that an unnecessary allegation had been kept in abeyance for such a long time. The complaint was quashed. Panigrahy was a member of the legislative assembly and a minister at the time. He later became the Speaker. Panigrahy had not been given a farewell either inside or outside the court at the time of his retirement as the Chief Justice.

Many of my well-wishers and friends tried to persuade me to get some prominent lawyer from outside the state when the allegation was taken up by the tribunal and the full bench. They even wanted to make all the arrangements in this regard. I had not agreed to the proposal. I had decided to fight on my own in a dangerous situation with full faith in God. No one could harm you if you have the blessings of God.

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# On Top of the Hills

I come from a *sasan* village near Puri. The only hill that I had seen was the Barunei Hill near Khurda. That was during my childhood. I had heard then that the sahibs went to hill stations during the summer. Hills looked beautiful from afar. I too wanted to spend a few days in the hills. But the opportunity had never presented itself. I went to Puri or Bhubaneswar during the holidays with my family after I started practicing law. That was the limit. We went to Ranchi once. I saw the unforgettable scene of the snow clad Kanchanjunga when I went to Darjeeling next year. My wife often recalled the experience of spending about one month in the far-off Ootcamund. We had *upma* packed in banana leaves for the first time along with coffee there as we started for Ooty from Coimbatore on the serpentine narrow gauge rail track. The hills of Ootcamund were full of greenery. The entire hill range was covered with deep green Eucalyptus leaves. It is known as the Blue Mountain. There is a hotel in Ooty named the Ratan Tata Hotel. It is a holiday home of the Tata Company for the army officers. Civilians were permitted to stay in the hotel if rooms were vacant. We got a room there in the afternoon with much difficulty. A European gentleman was supposed to go to Wellington that evening by car. The manager of the hotel advised us to go in the car to see the place. My wife was not very keen. But I persuaded her. The winter chill was terrible. The windows of the car were closed. The European gentleman accompanying us was more interested in smoking inside the confined space of the car rather than conversing with us. My wife did not tell me anything about her discomfiture. I had been lost in enjoying the scene on both sides of the road as we went downhill in the dim light of the evening. Wellington was located twenty miles down the hill. It is a famous training

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centre for military officers. The houses are built in the military style in a beautiful place. Blinking lights could be seen all around beyond the trees. The sahib left us after shaking hands. The car took the uphill road to return. I discovered my wife in an almost unconscious state beside me. The only other person in the car was the unknown driver. I waited for an inhabitated place to arrive where I could take her to a doctor. I asked for the address of a doctor as we entered Ooty. The doctor examined her inside the car and asked me not to worry. He said that people sometime suffered like that because of the high altitude and extreme cold. He did not prescribe any medicine but advised to take a bit of brandy in hot water. There was no question of drinking brandy and defiling the body. I came to know later that the cigarette smoke had caused the trouble. This would not have happened if her husband was not a smoker.

About a month passed as we were immersed in enjoying the beauty of the deep green Eucalyptus leaves wet with a soft drizzle, the soft warmth of the sun, and the leisurely gait of men and women on the narrow streets apparently without care in the world. We returned to Cuttack after spending a few days in Madras and Vizag. My wife always fondly reminisced about our stay in Ooty. I had been to Simla four times. But two trips were memorable for certain reasons. Once I had met P.K. Sen, brother of Malati Choudhury (Minudi). He had been posted there a few days ago as the commissioner of income tax. He lived there all by himself in a rented house. There were more mangoes in the house than furniture. Day after day, we discussed everything under the sun starting from literature to socialism while eating mangoes and chatting. I was in a hotel. I have seen both the brothers of Minudi. Both were idealists. They held high-ranking jobs for a living. But their mind and and soul were with Gandhiji and his selfless service. We had a good laugh when Mr. Sen narrated about the opposition to Minudi's marriage to Naba Bhai (Nabakrushna Choudhury) in the family circles. Minudi's mother did not think much of the village-oriented, congress follower Naba Choudhury. But the firebrand daughter was firm. The mother finally saw reason and made a compromise.

I almost gave up the ghost on another trip to Simla. The cold was terrible. It started raining in the afternoon. A chill wind was blowing too. A fire was burning in the fireplace inside the hotel room. I felt a chill when I came to my room after dinner. I passed off to sleep as I read a book lying on the bed. The room was full of smoke when I woke up breathless suddenly at around two in the morning. I could not see anything. Somehow I managed to open the door and came out. I sat in the corridor

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for a long time in the chill. When the cold became unbearable, I came back to the room and rang the bell for a long time. Finally, someone came and made arrangements for my stay in another room of the hotel. Investigations revealed the next day that the chimney of the fireplace had broken in the middle as a result of which the outlet for smoke had been closed. In the process, it was not possible for me to breathe inside the room. I would have been asphyxiated if I had stayed in the room a little longer.

Simla had been chiefly built during the British rule. It had been discovered in order to provide relief to the white sahibs and memsahibs of a country of cold climate from the harsh sun of the Indraprastha. The Viceroy and the other high-ranking officers shifted *en masse* to Simla during the summer. About six months out of the year passed in making arrangements for the movement and stay in Simla. The mode of living was different there. It was known as the Simla Culture. There was more of socialization than administration. Eligible young girls came there in search of a suitable life partner. Simla turned into a garden of lights in the evening. The hidden houses emitted faint light from within. Simla is now the capital city of Himachal Pradesh. The hill city is now crowded. One can get a whiff of the Simla of yore only when he moves around in the countryside.

Mussorie is another hill station at high altitude. The military training institute is at the foothill of Mussorie. The pent-up desire of twenty years was fulfilled by climbing twenty miles uphill, not on foot but by a vehicle. It was a small and quiet habitation. It has grown in size now. The training centre of topmost administrative officers of the country has foreclosed the opportunity of building private houses there. It was a rare opportunity to go there thrice to feel the old mysticism of Mussorie. The lights and shadows on the lonely, serpentine roads indicated a satiated desire that is now extinct. No one would disturb you if you sat under a tree for hours on end. Silence was eloquent there. I had some work in Dehra Dun once in connection with a case. I was spending the late afternoon and the night at Mussorie to relive the past until I had to attend to my work at the foothill. There was another attraction for me. My son Basant was studying as a cadet at the National Defence Academy from 1950 to 1954. He joined the Armed Corps on being commissioned after four years. I had once gone there to meet him. The eminent litterateur Durgamadhav Mishra, I.A.S., Govind Chandra Senapati, I.P.S. and others were hosting a tea party for the trainee cadets from Orissa in Hotel White House there. I too had joined them. People became friendlier with each other when they met on

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a foreign land. Durgamadhav Babu once told me that he still had a photograph with him from those days.

Nainital is a different kind of hill station. Land and water were connected to each other in a novel way on the hill. A sleeping lake seemingly chiselled into shape by a sculptor looks like holding on to the peaks of the hills inside it. There is a small habitation on the bank of the lake. We spent about a month there, spending our time alternately on the lake or on the bank of the lake or on the hills or in the hotel. My wife, younger daughter Nini and I had gone there first. My son Baby, daughter-in-law Nungu and grandson Ronnie joined us later. Ranikhet was not very far from Nainital. It was located at an even higher altitude. There is an army cantonment there. There are a string of gardens and orchards on the way. I had read about Ranikhet in the writings of Swami Yogananda. The eyes kept searching for the place on the way. I was not fortunate enough to possess divine eyes. I hoped the mortal eyes would be purged by a glance at it.

A tragedy was associated with the trip to Nainital. Pandit Godavarish Mishra passed away four days after I returned from Nainital to Cuttack. He had already been admitted to a nursing home by the time I reached Cuttack. Pandit Nilakantha Dash arrived while I was sitting beside Godavarish Babu and caressing his head. He stood near the door and looked inside. He did not come in. I came out on the verandah. He said sadly that things did not look good. That came to pass. A bright light went out the next morning. Godavarish Babu passed away in his sleep. I recalled his last words the day before. He had faintly said, "What could be done?" I had no answer with me. He went to the other side in quest of an answer. His daughter-in-law and my daughter Mini had given him a bit of water just before his death. Radhanath Rath arrived on hearing the news of his death. Others came too. We carried the bier from that place to the Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya where Gopabandhu Dash had been cremated. The last sign of a strange life went up in fire in the presence of Pandit Nilakantha Dash, Acharya Harihar Dash and others.

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# I Leave Cuttack

Sudhiranjan Das was the brother of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. He became a judge of the Calcutta High Court while practicing as a barrister there. He went to Delhi later as a judge of the Supreme Court. He was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court when Pandit Govind Ballav Pant was the home minister in the union cabinet. Mahtab was the chief minister of Orissa and Sukhtankar was the Governor. It was decided in the Union Cabinet that one third of the total number of judges in a High Court would be from a different state. This had been done on the advice of Pant Ji as a step towards national integration. This was not to be achieved through transfer among the judges. It was presumed that the rule would achieve the intended purpose if the concerned person was appointed in the High Court of another state from the day of his first appointment. Chief Justice Sudhiranjan Das started on a tour of all the High Courts of the country for this purpose. The purpose was to make a list of names on a national basis by selecting lawyers from the different High Courts. Picking a name from another state would be easy when a post fell vacant in one of the High Courts if a list was already available. A comprehensive list of those who would be promoted from lower levels was also being made. S.R. Das became the guest of the governor on his tour to Orissa in 1958. He called four to five lawyers for a personal interview. The lawyers must have been selected on the recommendation of the chief justice of the High Court. He also sat in the court for some time while cases were in progress. He sat in a court where I was acting as a lawyer. When he met me, he said, "I know you from the Chilka Fishing Case. You should have been a judge long back. Where would you like to go now—Calcutta or Patna?" Such direct questions were not always easy to answer.

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I had never thought of going outside Orissa as a judge. When he saw me vacillating, he said a couple of sentences in an easygoing manner that was natural to him to extract my silent consent. He said, "I know you have already made your pile. Now you should sacrifice for us." It is debatable whether there was any truth in his statement or not. But there was no doubting his affection towards me. I had appeared in a few cases earlier in the Supreme Court in his bench. The appeal of Anand Behera, a fisherman from Chilka, against the government had been heard in his court for a few days. Attorney General Setalvad and Solicitor General Daphtary, the opposing counsels, were countering my arguments with adroitness. Sudhiranjan commented from the bench at the end of the argument, "We have drawn only dry net. Anand Behera is having all the fish in Chilka." The case came to an end amid mild laughter. Sudhiranjan always asked me about Chilka's fish whenever we met later. I had to narrate the case in detail when he asked me the question before everyone at the dinner hosted in his honour on the day he arrived at Cuttack. He called me again before leaving Cuttack and asked me to choose between Calcutta and Patna. I opted for Patna. He had informed me later that he had kept my name on the top of the national panel that he had prepared. With the consent of the governor, chief minister and chief justice of Orissa, he had chosen me for Bihar as per the new formula of Pant Ji as two posts were vacant in the Patna High Court. Ramaswamy, I.C.S. was the Chief Justice and Srikrishna Singh was the chief minister of Bihar at the time. They gave their consent to the appointment. The approval of the President was received in March, 1958. The news reached Bhubaneswar through private channels. My son Pravat heard the news and returned to Cuttack in a hurry, hoping that the news must have reached Cuttack. But the news was received over the radio after a year and four months in 1959 July. Gati Babu (Gatikrushna Mishra) was the first person to hear the news. He informed us. The reason of the delay was known later. One year passed by the time the chief minister and the chief justice of Bihar agreed on the second name. My appointment was held up as it had been decided that both the appointments would be made at the same time. I was named as the senior judge as my name had been approved much earlier.

I was the advocate general at the time. I was no longer willing to go to Patna. Mahtab Babu informed me about the appointment a few days before the notification. I requested him to use his good offices at Delhi to relieve me or to recommend another name from Orissa. He refused. He reasoned with me that no one else from Orissa could be appointed if I did not go. He insisted that we should not forego the chance offered to us. I had already allowed myself to be manipulated. There was no possibility of

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a release now. I recalled how I was so sure of going to the Patna High Court in 1949 but had been let down by the intentional silence of someone. The same Patna was beckoning me again. Coincidentally, no one else was appointed after me anywhere from outside the state. Pant Ji's formula was put in the cold storage after my appointment. There is an effort now to revive the plan after twenty four years.

There were only three persons at the time in the Orissa ministry. They were Mahtab Babu himself, Rajendra Narayan Singhdeo, the Maharaja of Bolangir, and Radhanath Rath. Government Advocate Gangadhar Rath had hosted a tea party in the Nari Sangha Sadan to felicitate me on my appointment as a judge. The three ministers were present there to express their good wishes for me. A few more dinners had been arranged in the library of the bar association as also at other places. Orissa was under the Patna High Court when Subodh Babu and Bira Babu had been appointed judges. Orissa had its own High Court in 1948. Therefore, my appointment had been taken more seriously.

Satya Bhushan Burman had been appointed as a judge in the Orissa High Court under a different situation. Lingaraj Panigrahy was the minister of law at the time. Narasimham was the chief justice. One of them strongly favoured district judge Gopabandhu Mishra to be a judge in the High Court while the other insisted for the appointment of District Judge Rudraprasanna Mishra. Ultimately, the chief minister left the decision to Sudhiranjan Das, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The latter proposed the name of Satya Bhushan Burman who worked as his junior when he practiced as a barrister. The law minister of Orissa and the chief justice agreed to the proposal. It did not matter that the possibility of another Oriya being appointed as a judge in the High Court was nipped in the bud in this manner. The big guns held their respective grounds.

I was not aware that I had the goodwill of so many people. Chief Justice Narasimham was away from Cuttack at the time. He wrote me from Madras. I was associated with Utkal University and several other institutions. Most of them arranged farewell parties for me. There was a festive atmosphere for quite a number of days. I was embarrassed; but I did not have an option in the matter. I took leave of my well-wishers and friends on July 22, 1959, a Sunday, by boarding the Puri Express from Cuttack. My son Anant stayed all alone at Cuttack. My eldest son Pravat, his wife and Basant had gone on a tour to Europe at that time.

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# A New Chapter

I was not willing to go to Patna. I found my photograph and the news of my appointment on the front page of the Statesman on reaching Patna on the morning of July 24, 1959. The two local English dailies and a Hindi daily had also carried my photograph and news items about my joining. I could not understand why the news about the joining of Tarakeswar Nath, a lawyer of Patna, as a judge on the same day did not get any importance either in the national or local dailies. I was amazed at the tumultuous reception I got on the day of my joining. My appointment was accepted as the continuation of a tradition when I responded to my welcome by referring to the close ties between Magadh and Kalinga in the past. Everyone started showing extra courtesy to me when they found Governor Zakir Hussain and Chief Minister Srikrishna Singh being extremely cordial towards me as I had come from a different state. This had taken place at a dinner organized that evening to welcome me. I had never expected to get acquainted with so many distinguished people on the day of my joining at a new place. It was God's grace.

I was touched by two other incidents on the first day. Justice B.P. Sinha of the Supreme Court, who became the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court a few days later, was in Patna that day. The Supreme Court was having its summer vacation at the time. He was kind enough to come to the circuit house to meet me. I was his student in the Patna Law College. He had been very kind to me those days.

Initially, we had stayed in two rooms of the circuit house. Later, we shifted to House No. 14 on Bailey Road. It was a huge house with a large compound. Sir Khwaja Ahmed Noor used to stay in that house earlier.

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The arches on the upper storey verandahs had remained closed for the comfort of the burqa-clad begum. The wide verandahs became very comfortable when they were opened. The main house had sixteen rooms and the outhouse had eight. It was the residence of the executive council member of the governor after the capital city was built in Patna. There were no motor cars, electricity or water supply those days. Therefore, provision had been made for the living quarters of the hackney driver, water bearer, sweeper, washerman, fan puller, cows and cowherd, etc. Only the boss and his wife lived in the house. B.P. Sinha was a bit astonished to find our deities stationed in one corner of the bed room when he visited us in the circuit house. He must have thought that we were sahibs on the surface but old-fashioned at heart. He chatted with us like a guardian for some time and took leave of us. We were gratified by his visit and behaviour. Sir Asutosh Mukherjee's son Ramaprasad Mukherjee came after him. He had come to Patna as a member of the election tribunal after retiring as a judge of the Calcutta High Court. He had known about my arrival in Patna from the newspapers. I did not know him earlier. He stayed for a long time and left two mangoes for us. He showered his love on my younger daughter Nini (Bichitra) and grandson Ronnie (Pradip). Both of us were later active in the Indian Law Institute and Viswa Hindu Parishad.

Another incident on the first day was the beginning of intimacy with two distinguished Oriyas living in Patna. Dr. Mahendra Patnaik practiced medicine. He belonged to Khariar. He came and introduced himself. He reminded me that I had helped him in his admission to the Patna Medical College. He and his wife became extremely close to us. My wife became his elder sister and I became his elder brother. We remain close to each other even now. Both the husband and wife are deeply religious. They are totally dedicated to God. The flowers offered to God are placed on his prescriptions while treating critical patients. He was an able doctor and an affectionate friend. One of his daughters works now in Srinagar as a doctor. The second daughter is engaged in research in Geography in the University of Chicago. His youngest daughter is married to an officer of the armed forces who happens to be the son of retired professor and administrator Haribandhu Mohanty. Mahendra Babu's only son is well-established in company service. His wife Prema is the daughter of the eminent poetess Annapurna. She is the younger sister of retired Inspector of Schools Manorama Patnaik. Mahendra Babu passed away in the middle of 1985.

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Gajendra Prasad Das was the other Oriya inhabitant of Patna who obliged us with a visit that day. He practiced at the Patna High Court from the beginning. He was the younger brother of Mukund Prasad Das of Balasore who was the first Speaker of the Orissa Assembly. We knew each other previously. He had come to pay me a courtesy visit at the circuit house. I had to confront him in the court on my earlier visits to Patna as a lawyer as he happened to be the lawyer of the Government of Orissa at Patna. He was not perhaps very kind to me those days. His visit was very much welcome now in the changed circumstances. His wife became very close to my wife quite fast. The two of them spent many days together in singing Lord Ram's bhajans. At times, she came and spent a day or two with my wife when she got angry with her husband. She started a weekly Ramdhun assembly in her house. Many women belonging to Bihar joined the assembly. She was a deeply religious person. Gajendra Babu was always busy in his law practice because of his ability and reputation. Very unfortunately, his wife killed herself all of a sudden inside the bath room after locking it from inside. No one had any idea why her restless mind went berserk. Gajendra Babu too died unexpectedly. He had come to Cuttack to stay with his daughter Bani. Bani was the wife of eminent surgeon Girija Das Mohapatra. Gajendra Babu stayed with them for a few days and wanted to go back to Patna. His daughter pleaded with him to stay back for a few more days. The father answered that a bird may fly here and there but its mind was always occupied with its nest. It returned to the nest every evening. Neither the speaker nor the listener understood its meaning. Gajendra Babu returned to Patna. Two days later, he fell prostrate on the floor as he was moving inside the house after finishing his work in his residential office. It was all over. It was a cold night. I reached his house on getting the news. The bereaved friends were reminiscing about his strong will and penchant for work. His only son Bikram who was a lecturer in English had broken his leg and was bedridden. Gajendra Babu had become lonely ever since the death of his wife. He maintained a carefree gait before his son and daughter-in-law only to make sure that they did not worry on account of him. I pray for the two departed souls whenever I recall the affection showed to us by them on the first day of our meeting at Patna.

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# The Patna Days

Ten years at Patna was an important phase of life. One rarely gets so much of satisfaction in one's job as well as the goodwill of so many people. I was doing what I loved most to do. Fortunately, my judgments and conduct in the court were appreciated by all. It was God's grace that no unpleasant situation ever arose in my court. I always sat in the bench as the senior or the single judge fifteen days after my joining. I have no idea how it came to pass. The lawyers considered me special on two counts and favourable comments were made about me in the bar as a result. I dictated the judgments in most cases in the court immediately after the hearing was over. I did not keep the judgment in any case pending at the time of summer and *Puja* vacations. The chief justice and my fellow judges often asked me how I did it. It had turned into a habit with me for which I did not have to make any effort. The more important cases used to come to me. As a result, I got the help of the senior and best advocates in the court. It was a pleasure to work everyday with distinguished advocates like P.R. Das, Sir Sultan, Mahavir Prasad, Bankim Dey, Lal Narayan Sinha, Kailash Rai, Jagdish Sinha, Gangacharan Mukherjee, R.S. Chatterjee and others. The lawyers usually asked for extension of time at the time of hearing. The cases were delayed because of these extensions. I decided on a formula from the beginning. There were no further problems once everyone understood its implications. Extension of time was granted once if the lawyer took the excuse of not receiving instruction (i.e. fees) from the client. Another extension was given if the senior lawyer or the lawyer himself was engaged in another court that day. The third and final extension was granted if the lawyer reported ill. No further extension was granted. The work went on smoothly when the formula became known to all.

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One day I discovered P.R. Das was sitting beside the table in the court with his head resting on his hands. He had to appear in the first appeal case that day. If he had a case, he was always present in the court before his name was called. I had never seen him to appear in a case without full preparation. He made his arguments sitting in the court due to his advanced age. He looked totally exhausted that day. When I enquired about his welfare, he said that he had already taken two extensions of time in the case. He had come that day as no further extension might be allowed. I told him that he looked exhausted and that he should go home. I assured him that the hearing would be deferred. As he left the court, he told everyone in the corridor that Justice Mahapatra had saved him. No one had guessed that it was his last visit to the court. He took to the bed on reaching home and never got up again. We got the news two days later in the court that P.R. Das had passed away. I and some other people went to his residence to pay our last respects. He was wearing a white pajama and silk Panjabi as he lay in the death bed. An eminent barrister and intellectual of India had been in a totally helpless condition in the last phase of his life. He was the brother of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. He practiced as a barrister in Calcutta. He came to Patna in 1918 when the Patna High Court was established. He had been an additional judge for a short period. He resigned when circumstances compelled him to do so. Sir Courtney Tereh was the Chief Justice at the time. The High Court did not allow him to practice after his resignation. He was allowed to do so after the intervention of the privy council. He had earned a lot of money during his lifetime. But he had to come to the court till the end of his days because of financial difficulties even though he was ill. His grandson Sidhartha Shankar Ray had come from Calcutta to Patna in connection with a case on the day of his death. He lit the pyre at the Bansaghat cremation ground on the Ganges in the presence of many people. Priya Ranjan (P.R. Das) had turned religious towards the end of his days and participated in kirtans. He had only one vegetarian meal a day in the evening. He had sold his library to the Calcutta High Court. It was moved to Calcutta after his death.

Sir Sultan was another person who ran into financial problems in the last stage of his life although he had earned huge amount money as a barrister. He had graced several high positions such as the vice chancellor of a university and viceroy's executive councilor. His house in Patna was known as the Sultan Palace. He had earned an enormous amount of money as a barrister. He came to the court until he was bedridden just to take care of his household expenses. He also lost the palace subsequently.

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He lived as a poor man in his village and died there. He had suffered in this manner by bequeathing his property and income in favour of his adopted son. Priyaranjan Das had also suffered in the last stage of his life by yielding to a relative in everything. Madhu Babu (Madhusudan Das) had suffered a similar fate in Cuttack. He had to declare himself as an insolvent in the court as he was not in a position to repay his debts. Fate often dealt a raw hand to some people.

I had to hold court once at midnight. All constitutional cases were taken up in our bench at the time. A B.A. examinee informed at 10 p.m. that he had been debarred from appearing at the examination due to start the next morning. The university had notified in the evening that day that he had shortage of attendance. The admit card issued to him earlier had been annulled. I considered it necessary to give a primary hearing to the examinee. Otherwise, he would have been deprived of appearing at the examination the next day. I informed the other judge who sat on the bench with me and he came to my residence. It was two in the morning by the time the application was examined and a stay was ordered till the final disposal of the case. The deputy registrar was directed by us to inform the vice chancellor about the order before morning. Such acts are rare although they are perfectly legal in emergency cases. A judge decides his own course of action. He is neither subordinate to the chief justice nor any one else in such matters.

A large number of cases came to the court against election results after the panchayat elections in Bihar were over. The oath commissioner, the peskars and the stamp vendors could not cope with the work load till the last minute of the last date scheduled for filing of the cases as there were more than a hundred such cases. A few advocates came to my court to express their unhappiness and grievance. Our court was scheduled to receive applications that day. We sat for two more hours after 4 p.m. and accepted all the applications. We directed that affidavits and stamp reports could be submitted the next day. A discussion about the propriety of our action was held in the next full court meeting when a fellow judge raised the matter. It was agreed that only our bench was competent enough to judge the propriety of our action.

An advocate informed us in the last hour of a day that he wanted to submit an urgent application in a criminal case filed by him. He should have done it in the court of the chief justice. But the chief justice had not come to the court that day as he was ill. The special criminal bench too had not sat that day. We agreed to hear the application at 3.30 p.m. and

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directed that the case records should be placed before us at that time. The records could not come as there was some problem in the office. We left the bench after instructing that the case should be listed first the next day. There was no special criminal bench the next day either. The case was also not listed in our court. The same advocate complained to us the next morning that his client was put to a great deal of inconvenience as his urgent application had not been taken up for consideration until then. We felt embarrassed that there was unnecessary delay in the court for a simple thing. We requested the advocates of both sides to be present at 2 p.m. We examined the concerned papers and issued orders to the registrar on the urgent application. Simultaneously, we issued a notice of contempt of court against the deputy registrar for having disobeyed our order of the previous day for the preparation of the list. There was pandemonium in the court in no time. The chief justice telephoned me in the evening that day and asked me for a solution to the problem. I answered him by saying, "Why should the deputy registrar be spared if government officers are punished on disobeying the orders of the court?"

The Registrar or the deputy registrar consulted the chief justice about the list of the day. The chief justice must have directed that all criminal cases should be taken up by the criminal bench. Therefore, the special instruction given by our court had not been carried out. If the deputy registrar gave this reason as an explanation, the chief justice might be indicted for contempt of court. Hence, the deputy registrar presented himself in the court on the scheduled date and begged the forgiveness of the court as the special instruction of our court had not been carried out. The court pardoned him after pointing it out that it had been a serious lapse on his part.

The decorum in the Raj Bhavan was remarkable when Zakir Hussain was the governor. Anantashayanam Iyengar, the former speaker of the *Lok Sabha*, came next as governor. He talked a great deal. Even as the Speaker of the *Lok Sabha*, he spoke more than the members. He was eager to assert himself when he became the governor. He inaugurated a conference of judicial officers where the chief justice was the chief guest. The other judges were present. Some of the judges were also scheduled to speak at the conference on specific topics. A very unpleasant situation arose in the meeting when the Governor made certain irascible comments about the munsifs in his address. The chief justice, who was also the chief guest, finished his address without making any reference to the comments of the governor. Three of the judges had to speak. My turn came last. There was

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huge applause when I said that the aforesaid comment of the governor had been given because he was either not very familiar with the working of the lower courts or he carried some bitter experience from the place and the time when he used to practice law. My speech had not attracted too much attention. But three resolutions were passed in the conference on the second day. None of us judges was present that day. The first resolution was to protest against the caustic comment of the governor. The second resolution regretted that the chief justice had not made any effort to provide protection to the judicial officers against the uncalled-for comments of the governor. The third resolution was to express the gratitude of the judicial officers towards me as I had discussed the matter threadbare. The governor was infuriated when he read the reports in the newspapers. The chief justice felt remorseful that he had not said anything about the matter. I was in a difficult situation for the gratuitous accolades heaped on me. On our advice and request, the chief justice wrote a long letter to the governor that his sarcastic comment on the judiciary was not based on facts. The governor became even more inflamed. He called me one evening over telephone when he heard that two district judges were planning to file a petition in the High Court against him for contempt of court because of his open comment. He called me at times and chatted with me as I lived close to the *Raj Bhavan.* Mostly, he discussed the powers conferred on the governor by the constitution. His objective was something else that day. He wanted to find a solution to the problem that had arisen because of his comments at the conference of judicial officers. I advised him to reply tactfully to the letter of the chief justice by saying that he did not intend to make any adverse comment on the judiciary or any one else. I also assured him that I would do my best to bring an end to the matter if he agreed to do so. Unfortunately, the matter became even more complicated because of something else. Judge Khalil Ahmed was the senior most judge of the High Court next to the chief justice. The administrative work of the judicial department was in his charge as the J.A.D. Khalil Ahmed was unhappy when the chief justice assigned the work to Satish Chandra Mishra, another judge. The reply from the governor was delayed as Khalil Ahmed, angry with the chief justice, lent support to the governor. I invited the Governor and the chief justice to dinner one evening and a draft reply was prepared so as to save both their faces. The chief justice called the two district judges the next day and dissuaded them from taking any further action in the matter of contempt of court. He sent a copy of the reply he had received from the governor to the president of the judicial officers' association. The letter was

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acknowledged with thanks by the working committee of the association and the Governor was duly intimated about it. The matter came to an end there.

Chief Justice Ramaswamy was a religious man. He was also vain about his position and erudition. He never went to anyone's place unless it was an invitation from the Raj Bhavan. I had gone to his residence with my wife on my second evening at Patna to pay a courtesy call. He and his wife felt extremely gratified. Both of them started visiting us. Ramaswamy always lay prostrate in our puja room for some time when he came. The other judges were curious to know how he visited me at my house when he neither visited anyone else nor invited anyone to his house. I invited the chief justice along with the other judges to my house for dinner one evening. I put forth a proposal that evening that all the judges should have a get together at the residence of one of the judges at least on one Saturday every month. Everyone agreed enthusiastically. The goodwill among the judges increased in the process. The matter was discussed in the Bar and it was agreed by all that I was instrumental in initiating a new tradition.

There were two lifts in the High Court for the judges to go to the court rooms on the first floor from their chambers on the ground floor. I noticed that elderly and indisposed advocates found it difficult go to the advocates' association hall and the bar association hall climbing the long staircase. I pleaded with the Chief Justice that they be permitted to use the lift once to go up and another time to come down. He was indecisive for a moment but finally agreed to the proposal. This was highly appreciated by the Bar when the lawyers were informed about it. I too received my share of the accolades.

Balabhadra Prasad was the vice chancellor of Patna University at the time. Both of us were linked with Utkal University from the beginning when he was at Cuttack. He got me involved with Patna University soon after I came to Patna. I was mostly connected with the Patna Law College. The relationship with the University had continued until my departure from Patna. I played a major role in the student union activities, annual functions of the hostels, debates, seminars, etc. A committee had been set up under my chairmanship to study the necessity of bringing about reforms in law education in the university when Dr. K.K. Dutta was the vice chancellor. Principal Deshpande of Law College was its secretary, and advocate general Mahavir Prasad and Government Advocate Lala Narayan Sinha were members. Our recommendations (known as the Mahapatra Committee Recommendations) had been accepted by the

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Patna University and some other universities of northern India. As a result, full time professors were appointed and a three year curriculum was introduced in law colleges.

An unusual situation arose in one of the annual functions of the University Students Union. The matter had been discussed for a long time among the general public. Chief Minister Srikrishna Singh was scheduled to inaugurate the function. Governor Zakir Hussain was the President and I was the chief speaker. The governor and I arrived at the place in time. More than a thousand students, a large number of professors, the governor and I kept waiting for the chief minister. The Governor was unwilling to begin the proceedings in his absence. Twenty minutes passed in this manner when I stood up and said humbly, "The chief minister is delayed for some reason. The governor is waiting here out of courtesy. The students seem to be restive. If the audience agrees to it, I would like to deliver my speech first to get the proceedings started. The formal meeting may begin on the arrival of the chief minister." I received the consent of the audience through a huge applause and I started my speech. The chief minister arrived after a while. He not only appreciated my initiative but also said in zest, "Judges show the way not only in the courts but outside too. The judge saheb has saved me from a very embarrassing situation. I am grateful to him for it and I beg the forgiveness of everyone present here, especially the governor ...." The meeting continued without any ill will. Everyone wondered how the chief minister was so pleased with me in stead of getting angry.

Srikrishna Singh was a generous person. He was widely read. He was extremely courteous too. I had perhaps met him in an auspicious moment. I lived not very far from his residence. I went to him one Sunday morning. He was sitting on a chair with turmeric paste applied to his feet as there was pain in his feet. He had sent for me to talk about Orissa. In about half an hour, we moved to the topic of the integration of Singhbhum, Saraikala and Kharsuan with Orissa. He asked for three files from the Secretariat. The map was taken out. He agreed for the integration of Saraikala except Jamshedpur with Orissa. He said that he could persuade the legislative council and the centre to agree to it. There was no opposition to the integration of Kharsuan. The decision relating to other parts of Singhbhum was deferred. He had a hunch that the problem would be automatically solved if the Jagannathpur Police Station area was left in Bihar along with Jamshedpur. It was decided that I should inform his decision confidentially to Mahtab Babu, the Chief Minister of Orissa, and

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get the support of Morarji Desai at the centre without delay. I had no idea why Srikrishna Singh discussed this matter with me in such an easygoing manner and accepted the responsibility. I was naturally pleased at the prospect of a solution to a long-cherished desire of the Oriyas. The Raja Saheb of Saraikala used to meet me when he came to Patna. He was eager that Saraikala should get integrated with Orissa except for one police station area, although ten years ago, in 1947–48, Saraikala had been left out from integration with Orissa because of his obduracy. A strong group in Bihar opposed the return of Saraikala and Kharsuan to Orissa. Baldev Sahay, the former advocate general of Bihar, was the leader of the group. Srikrishna Singh had persuaded him to agree to his proposal. Morarji Desai was scheduled to come to Bhubaneswar a few days after this conversation. I came from Patna to Cuttack the day before his arrival and informed Mahtab Babu about the developments. Mahtab Babu, Rajendra Narayan Singhdeo and I came to the guest house with Morarji Desai from the airport. After I reported my conversation with Srikrishna Singh in detail, Morarji Desai agreed to take the responsibility of getting the assent of the centre for the proposal. I went with Rajendra Narayan Singhdeo to his residence to demarcate the areas on a map that were to be left out of Saraikala at the time of its integration with Orissa. The draft to be prepared for the integration was also discussed there. The chief minister had arranged a lunch in the guest house in honour of Morarji Desai. I was not keen to join the lunch but I could not turn down the request of the chief minister. I returned to Patna the same evening and reported my conversation with Morarji Desai to Srikrishna Singh. He gave me a firm assurance that he would do the work as quickly as possible. I was extremely pleased that I had been able to do something for the fulfillment of a long-cherished desire of the Oriyas. I had a feeling that I had perhaps come to Patna for this reason.

However, utter disappointment was waiting for me. Unfortunately, the secret pact became public in Bhubaneswar. I had no idea who did it. I had no doubt that the process of integration would be set in motion after getting a firm assurance from Morarji Desai. Rajendra Narayan was a serious person. He was the Maharaja of Bolangir, but he was the son of the Raja of Saraikala. He might have informed his father about it and the information might have leaked from that source. An officer of high rank who was privy to this information might have done it. Be that as it may, when the information became publicly known, a few people suspected that Mahtab Babu and Rajendra Narayan had some ulterior motive in handing over Jamshedpur, which was home to the best steel plant of India, to Bihar

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on a platter. A few days later, Jadumani Mangaraj asked a question in the Assembly, "It is being heard that the Government of Orissa is trying to integrate Saraikala sans Jamshedpur with Orissa. Is this report true?" When the question was reported in the newspapers, a question was raised in the Bihar Assembly, "Has the Government of Bihar agreed to split Saraikala from Bihar?" Chief Minister Srikrishna Singh was in an awkward situation and answered in the negative. He called me at eight in the evening the same day over telephone and wanted to know how the matter had leaked. I could not understand anything and went to his residence immediately. He said sadly that he had been accused in the assembly of conspiring against the interests of Bihar on the basis of the question raised in the Orissa Assembly, and that he was left with no other choice except to say that it was a rumour and there was no truth in it. He was sad. I felt disappointed. I could guess from his conversation that he was no longer willing to get into muddy waters. A great hope was belied without any reason. It was a small mercy that no one except Srikrishna Singh knew of my involvement in the matter. The misfortune could have been avoided if Jadumani Mangaraj had been a bit more circumspect. He was full of remorse when he came to know everything. But things were beyond repair by that time.

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# Deity's Grace

I was not only known as a judge in Patna. My wife too was admired by many upper class families because of the *Thakura* (deity) in our house. She had become extremely close to the wife of Gajendra Prasad Das, the famous advocate, from the day they got acquainted. She had been living in Patna for a long time. She talked about our *Thakura* to many people in Patna as a result of which many women of Patna started visiting our house with her for a *darshan* of the *Thakura*. It was definitely very strange that eyes should appear on their own on all sides of a broken brick, and a nose and a face should manifest themselves in one part of the same brick. We were grateful to *Thakura* for His kindness towards us and conducted ourselves accordingly. Boasting about it was out of question; we never even talked about it anywhere outside. We were always scared that He, who had been so kind to manifest Himself on His own in our house on a brick, might some day disappear the same way. My wife constantly worried about it and was in a frightened state. Gajendra Babu's wife was more outgoing. She was deeply religious. It was not possible on the part of my wife to oppose her when she brought women from aristocratic families along with her to show our *Thakura*. She was also delighted by the approbatory comments of others. This went on in the late mornings or in the afternoons when I was ordinarily in the High Court. This began to grow in magnitude gradually. The psyche and desires of all Hindu women were alike. The wives, sisters and mothers of a few judges also visited our house. The judges often complained to me during the midday recess as to why I had not told them anything about it earlier. No one understood me. Was *Thakura* an expression of worldly riches that I should have flaunted Him everywhere?

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Chief Justice Ramaswamy and his wife came one evening for the darshan of *Thakura*. They lay prostrate before Him for some time before listening to the details about His manifestation in our house from my wife in broken Hindi. They were Tamilians and we were Oriyas. Both of us were not used to Hindi. Thus, the feelings were more important than the language. Ramaswamy went later to the Supreme Court as a judge. R.L. Narasimham came as the Chief Justice. He was known to us from Cuttack, but there was no intimacy in our acquaintance. Narasimham belonged to the I.C.S. cadre. He had been a district judge and law Secretary. He became a judge in Orissa High Court when it was established in 1948 before being appointed as the chief justice. I was an advocate at Cuttack. He did not believe in socializing with advocates outside the premises of the court. He maintained his distance from the advocates for fear that he may be accused of partiality in his judgments. He had called me several times to his chamber in the court at Cuttack for a discussion when he had a problem on hand. But he always cautioned me that I should not talk about our meetings. He looked down upon the lawyers in general. I have noticed this mentality with most of the judges from the I.C.S. cadre. A lawyer was no longer an untouchable once he became a judge. Chief Justice Narasimham found himself in hot waters once when he accused Nandlal Bhatalia, another judge, that he was being too familiar with the advocates outside the court premises. The accused judge immediately turned upon him and said that the chief justice had no compunction in socializing freely with government officers of high rank. He asked if he considered the advocates to be inferior to such officers. Both sides realized their respective weaknesses and made truce. It was also noticed later that both of them took care to bring about a change in their conduct. A judge has to maintain a bit of distance from others. One who does not or cannot do it always came under a scanner.

Our intimacy grew after Narasimham came to Patna as the Chief Justice. I was not aware nor had he told anyone that he was a huge admirer of my work as an advocate at Cuttack. One day he told a congregation of judges that, when he worked as a district judge at Cuttack, he had found the shortest advocate there having the most number of cases. He was making a reference to me. It was of course an exaggerated statement. He and his wife came to our residence for a darshan of *Thakura* just as Ramaswamy did before him. He took interest in a discussion of the Bhagavad Gita. His wife played the *veena*.

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Mohanananda Maharaj of Calcutta had many disciples in Patna. He came to Patna once a year. He went to several places in India, Europe and America. He was lost to the outside world when he performed *kirtans*. He sang *bhajans* in a melodious voice. These traits attracted people to his congregations. He was staying in the house of one of his Bengali disciples on Exhibition Road in one of his visits to Patna. I had gone there one evening with my wife a few days after his arrival. He asked my wife immediately on being introduced, "I have heard that a strange *Thakura* has manifested Himself in your house. I would like to come to see Him. But it is the residence of the judge saheb. Would I be permitted to come?" He spoke in a mellifluous voice with an affectionate glance. I told him that it would be an act of kindness on his part to visit us and that we would be gratified. He came the next evening with his disciples, both ladies and gents, in tow. Our *Thakura* had been placed on a small pedestal in a huge room. A lamp glowed in front all the time. Before my wife could pay her respect to him, he sat down cross-legged on the floor. Religious leaders do not ordinarily sit on the floor without a mat. All of us were speechless. He too was quiet. He asked me after a long time in Bengali if could touch the image. Did he really need our permission for anything? His eyes turned moist as he ran his fingers on the brick, his body still. My wife was sitting beside him. Her eyes were downcast. I was standing along with his disciples. One rarely got such an experience in life. There are very few experiences in life that left a deep impression and this was one of those cases. He said after a while that he had seen a similar sign in the recess of a stone wall in Badrinath and that what he was seeing for the second time then was the kindness of God. Mohanananda Maharaj always asked me about our *Thakura* whenever we met on later occasions. Once he had come to Puri during the car festival. He reiterated the same thing there. Jesus Christ's face floated into view when one looked at the Maharaj.

A branch of the Goudiya Mission of Calcutta was located in Patna. It was being run by a highly disciplined management. The family of a Bengali lawyer of the High Court was one of the patrons of the *math*. I came to know that they had donated twenty thousand rupees for the construction of the *math*. We went there at times during the evening *aarti*. The environment was absolutely calm and quiet. The chief of the Goudiya *Math* came there once a year. I heard one day upon returning from the High Court that he had come to our residence in the afternoon to see our *Thakura*. He was very old and of a weak frame. He was unable to walk. Climbing stairs was out of question. Two of his disciples had lifted him on

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a chair to our *puja* room on the first floor. I heard that he had chatted about our *Thakura* with my wife for a long time and was extremely pleased. He had also come to our house another year. He believed that God had been kind enough to manifest Himself in the broken brick. One of his higher order disciples had later proposed to take our *Thakura* to the temple in the *math* so that He could be worshipped there. My wife had been amazed at the proposition. But it was natural for her to say no. Who would part with her foremost hope? My judge-friend Satish Chandra Mishra and I had later attended one of the annual functions of the *math* as the president and the chief guest. The chief of the *math* was present there. The two of us spoke little. But we were amazed at the sarcasm of the eighty year old chief of the *math* in his speech towards the modern people who were bent on destroying the hindu tradition. His body was weak. But his faith was so strong that he believed he was still capable of meeting all kinds of adverse situations. Faith indeed moved mountains. One who understood the *Sanatan Dharma* knew its significance.

There are several temples and *maths* dedicated to Sri Ram in Ayodhya. We once stayed there for five days. Our days were spent in listening to the recitations of the Ramayana and contemplating about it. My wife had been induced from the childhood by her grandmother to pray to Sri Ram. Ayodhya seemed to be a heaven to her. We bathed in the Sarju River and went around the *maths*. A *yajna* was being performed at a *math* at the time. One hundred and eight Brahmins were reciting the Sanskrit Ramayana. We stood on one side for a long time on the first day of our visit there. We were indeed amazed and gratified when we found the chief of the *math* at our place at about five in the afternoon. He had found my identity from someone during the day. He had thought that we were unhappy as we had not been properly received. I had not gone to the venue of the *yajna* as a judge, had I? I had cautioned my peon not to don his official clothes after we had reached Ayodhya. He accompanied us everywhere as a servant. We had earlier moved around different places as we wished without attracting any attention. Some restrictions were automatically imposed on our movements in the next two days when we got acquainted with the *Mahanta* of the *math*. The restrictions increased even more after the administration there deployed the police to guard our place of stay and to act as an escort when we moved around. I was no longer a simple spectator at the venue of the *yajna*. I was also very kindly permitted to participate in the oblation. In course of our conversation, the *Mahanta* came to know of the sudden arrival of Ram, Laxman and Sita from Kashi *Dham* at our house at Cuttack as also the manifestation of *Thakura* on the brick at Puri.

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The *Mahanta* arrived one day at our house with five of his followers about two months after our return from Ayodhya to have a darshan of *Thakura*. He paid several visits to our house after that first visit. He said that he came to Patna to have a *darshan* of *Thakura*. He always carried bananas with him as an offering. He recited the Ramayana in a mellifluous voice. We felt gratified to hear him sing several times in our *puja* room.

We lived at Bailey Road in Patna. The Serpentine Road was nearby. The Pancha Mandir was at the crossing of the two roads. It was a popular place for the worship of Sri Ram. The chief of another *math* of Ayodhya was its superintendent. He came at intervals and stayed at the Pancha Mandir for long periods. He came to our residence several times in the afternoon to have a *darshan* of *Thakura*. He had many women followers. A large number of women visited the Pancha Mandir. I had gone there several times at the time of the evening *aarti*. Even after leaving Patna, we have been sending a small contribution to the temple every year at the time of the festival of *Sitavivaha*. My wife still corresponds occasionally with the successor to the *Mahanta* after the demise of the latter. Of course, they have not met as yet. He had written that he would be visiting Puri and Cuttack although he has not been able to do so till now. Our relationship with him developed because of the loving memory of his predecessor. We lost contact with the Goudiya Mission after the death of its chief. Neither I nor my wife has been formally initiated by any guru. Hence, we have maintained personal relationships rather than relationship with a community.

A dispute relating to the seat of the Goudiya Mission at Calcutta has been going on since a long time in the Calcutta High Court. I had heard about it at Patna although I was not aware of the details. The other party had come to me once while I stayed in my house at Puri one summer on my return from Patna. He had come to take part in the foundation stone laying ceremony of a portion of the newly constructed *math* at Puri. I recalled my relationship with the other group at Patna. I noticed a difference in their personalities. Some people have religion in their blood; some others are pretenders. This group has also changed its stance. The present Acharya had stayed in my house at Cuttack for some time. But we could never be really close to each other.

It is true that my wife was well known in Patna because of our *Thakura*. She also became known in places like Ranchi, Gaya and Calcutta through the people of Patna. On our return from Patna, she also became well known in Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Puri, Rourkela and other places.

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Indubhushan Palit, the father of Dr. S.B.Palit of Berhampur, had retired as an Inspector of Schools. He and his wife were staying at Bhubaneswar for some time. They had been introduced to my wife there. Acquaintance with her meant acquaintance with *Thakura*. He used to correspond with us after his return to Berhampur. He had published a book of poems in Oriya at his own expense describing the bond between *Thakura* and my wife. We were amazed to read it when we received a copy of the book by post. His wife had continued to show the same affection to us after his death. Total faith and dependence are the only step to have a profound experience. It is not available if one begs for it. One has to pour his heart out and call.

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# Assorted Work

A large number of Bengalis lived in Patna. They were a powerful group. Of course, their dominance is gradually on the wane. The Bengalis had cornered most of the government jobs as well as lucrative professions in the district headquarters of Bihar just as they had done it in Orissa. It was the same in the field of education. The situation was the same before Bihar and Orissa were separated from Bengal in 1912. The only difference between Bihar and Orissa was that, unlike in Orissa, the Bengalis had not been able to acquire any zemindaris in Bihar.

I had stayed for a few days in the circuit house upon my arrival in Patna. The Rabindra Bhavan was just in front. It was chiefly the cultural centre of the Bengalis. Meetings, discussions, dramas, musical performances and other such activities were held there round the year. I became closely associated with these activities soon after my arrival at Patna because of the persuasion of Hemant Kumar, a Bengali judge-friend of mine. Soon I was closely involved with the institution and found myself taking a leading part in all the activities. This had continued throughout my ten year stay at Patna. Judge Hemant Kumar had heard about my so-called inclination towards literature before my arrival at Patna. Once it became known that I was going to Patna, one of his acquaintances at Cuttack had written a letter to him describing in detail about me. I had been amazed when Hemant Kumar said in our first meeting that he knew about the Sabuja Sahitya Samiti, Yugaveena, etc. He told me later how he had got so much information about me. Hemant Kumar introduced me to the Rabindra Bhavan. But he himself did not take an active part in its functioning. On the other hand, his wife and daughter seemed to be more interested in it. A huge black Alsatian provided him a great deal more comfort.

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Anantashayanam Iyengar came as the Governor after Zakir Hussain. Nityananda Kanungo came after him from Gujarat. The governors came occasionally to the programmes held at the Rabindra Bhavan. A touching incident once took place in the presence of Kanungo. Nityananda Babu was the president of a meeting where I had to deliver a talk on 'Rabindranath, Orissa and Oriya literature'. Kanungo Babu stood up and embraced a tall, non-Oriya spectator who came up on the dais taking rapid strides towards him, and started chatting with him in Oriya in a loud voice using the familiar Oriya pronoun '*tu*'. The gentleman in question was Dr. Sharadindu Ghoshal, a former student of the Collegiate School of Cuttack, who was then a professor of the Medical College. He walked at least twelve miles a day to keep himself fit. He took a great deal of interest in sports and was a capable actor. He talked non-stop. He never owed a dime to anyone. Once I was returning to Patna from Calcutta in the Delhi Express. I found Dr. Sharadindu loitering on the platform in search of a berth on the train. It was important for him to come to Patna that day. But there was no berth vacant. I had a coupe to myself. The upper berth was vacant. He was overjoyed when I invited him to join me. But he was a bit embarrassed. He offered me the price of a ticket when we reached Patna. I had not paid for the other berth. There was no reason why I should have taken the money from him. The judges were given a coupe with two berths for the price of one. The doctor worried about it. He had traveled an entire night by train. How would he not pay the fare? He put his mind at rest finally after donating the price of one ticket to a charitable institution. There are a few such ethical people around because of whom the world still survives. Ghoshal was Nityananda Babu's classmate. They addressed each other as rascal. They had met after a long time in the meeting hall. Both were held in high esteem by the society. But their high positions had not been able to deter them from expressing the spontaneous and unbounded joy that they had displayed that day on meeting each other. This had also overwhelmed everyone present in the meeting hall. Feelings hold sway over consciousness when people hold high positions in society. The dam breaks when consciousness gets the better of feelings.

Why Rabindranath had not been translated into Oriya was the topic for discussion another day at the Rabindra Bhavan. Rabindranath had been widely translated into many languages outside India and almost all the other languages of India except Oriya. Only a few creations of Rabindranath have been translated into Oriya. I was the only speaker at the meeting. I did not have any option except to say certain things against the Bengalis in this connection. I had pointed out that the need for

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translating Rabindranath into Oriya had not been felt as the creations of Rabindranath had been adored by most Oriyas in the original Bengali. This had occurred due to the contemporary social situation when the Bengalis had actively promoted their language in the neighbouring provinces. Apart from the formal vote of thanks for my lecture, I noticed from the conversation of the audience that my speech had not created any kind of bitterness or hostility.

After I delivered a talk on the contributions of Sabuja Sahitya Samiti and Nabayuga Sahitya Sansad to Oriya literature at a meeting, three separate discussions on the contributions of young writers to contemporary Bengali literature had stirred the audience. I came to know later that a few of my writings on Rabindranath in English had been translated into Bengali and published in a book form along with a few essays written by others.

*Hindi Sahitya Parishad* (the name could be wrong) was located at another place in Patna. Other meetings were also held there apart from meetings on literary discussions. It was nót as active as the Rabindra Bhavan. Artistes sometime sang bhajans there. Important meetings like the United Nations Day are conducted there. People gather in large number in the functions held there as the place is thickly inhabited. I had taken a leading part in many meetings held there.

The Theosophical Society had its own premises near the Patna College. Special sessions are often held there apart from the weekly meetings. For some reason, I was getting regular invitations from the Society to take part in the meetings. I had the opportunity of reading several books on Theosophy at the time. I had the occasion to share the dais there a number of times with Anantashayanam Iyengar, the Governor of Bihar. I found him to be a good speaker who had a keen interest in religious matters. He knew a great deal about Adyaar of Madras, the seat of the Theosophical Society. The Theosophists are strong believers. They operate in a systematic manner and their expressions are controlled.

The English Speaking Union was started in Patna during my stay there. A few professors had played an important role in opening the Patna Chapter. I was made its president from the beginning. I had shouldered the responsibility till my departure from Patna. The seat of the organization is located in London. It has its branches all over the commonwealth countries. There are several branches in India too. It is a well-regulated institution. It promotes the English language besides spreading the message of peace all around. Adults who were familiar with

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English were eligible to be its members. It is far removed from any kind of active politics. This organization was run with a lot of enthusiasm and through this close contact was established among the different branches of the commonwealth which gave a tolerant and liberal view to others. Its branch in America is known as the English Speaking Union of the U.S.A. At least two meetings were held every month in Patna. Guests from outside attended the meetings at times. Discussions took place on specific topics. A couple from London had attended one of the meetings. They were connected to the central organization. The husband was perhaps a retired engineer. The wife was engaged in social service. She was affectionate and friendly. A professor described her as a 'homely lady' while introducing her. The lady was extremely embarrassed. Her husband stared at her. I felt mortified. A woman is described as a homely lady when she was either short or not beautiful. The professor did not mean it. He had used the words because the lady had a friendly attitude. I clarified the matter when my turn came to speak. The guests were comforted. There was laughter all around when I described the episode at a lunch given in my honour at the Dartmouth House on the Charles Street of London, the central office of the Commonwealth English Speaking Union. This is an example of the misunderstanding that could be created when one did not know the usage of the language.

Sri Mahesh Yogi had come to Patna. There was a huge gathering to listen to his discourse. A few officers in the I.A.S. cadre had arranged the meeting. *Swamiji* stayed at the residence of one of these officers. I had been asked earlier to preside over the meeting. Swamiji had just returned from America after delivering lectures on transcendental meditation at the Harvard University. Many people were curious to know more about it when the Swamiji explained the concept in detail. It was decided thereafter to open a branch of transcendental meditation in Patna. Thirty six persons took membership immediately. It was decided to conduct the activities of the branch from a house near the residence of A.B.N. Sinha, advocate. High officials, advocates, engineers and professors were among the people who became its members. There was one doctor too. I became the president. The branch started operating from the following Sunday. A follower of Mahesh Yogi demonstrated and taught transcendental meditation. A few people had learnt the process earlier from Swamiji himself. The discourses of Mahesh Yogi were enlightening. It was easy to get along with him. His analysis was based on scientific principles. Basically, he advised people as to how to increase the power of

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concentration. But the branch closed down within six months of his departure from Patna.

The *Sikh Gurudwara* was another venerable place in Patna. It was the birth place of Guru Govind Singh. I do not remember how I got involved with it. People came from the Gurudwara at times to give me the English translations of their religious scriptures and related books. I had to prepare myself in advance to preside over the meetings held on the life and times of Nanak and Guru Govind. Intimacy developed with a few people in Patna in the process. There were a few sikhs among the high officials in Patna. The Sikhs were always conscious as a group.

My association with the rotary club had continued along with all these commitments. I was among the pioneers who had started the rotary club at Cuttack in 1944. I was the secretary for the first two years and became the president in 1955–56. The rotary club of Patna had been established earlier. I had hoped that the then president of the club would ask me to join it soon after my arrival at Patna. I received the invitation in due course and joined. None of the judges was in the rotary although Chief Justice Sir C.M. Agarwal was the first president of the rotary club of Patna. He had already passed away by the time I had reached Patna.

I knew another gentleman there. His name was Lolìsen. He was a tall and heavyset man. He had a car repairing outfit and a hotel. He was closely associated with the Ramakrishna Mission. He was in a depressed state of mind after his childless wife lost her eyesight. He had spent a large amount of money on her treatment which had yielded no result. He donated a major part of his profits every year to the mission after the death of his wife. He insisted that I should join the rotary. I became totally involved with the club once I made an entry. I had been elected as the Rotary District Governor for the year 1967–68 during my stay at Patna. Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Nepal, Bhutan Sikkim, Bangladesh and Burma were included under District 325. It was tough on my part to do the work relating to the rotary along with my job at the High Court. I had organized the annual conference that year at Calcutta in 1968 March with the active association of the rotary clubs of Calcutta. The conference had gone smoothly enough. The assembly had been held at Batanagar. The next assembly had been held on the beach at Digha. I had received unqualified support of my rotary friends in organizing these meets. It would not have been possible on my part to publish the monthly newsletter of rotary and send it to all the clubs and other places if my son Baby (Pravat) had not taken over that responsibility. My judge-friends

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took digs at me at times on observing my predicament as to why I took so much responsibility unto myself. But one had to discharge one's responsibilities at all costs.

I received a letter from Biju Patnaik on 28.7.66 as my retirement from Patna drew near.

My dear Dada,

I understand that you are retiring soon. Since you are young and willing, why not join the club of the scoundrels and go to Lok Sabha.

Please let me know what you think.

Affectionately,

Biju

Harihar Mahapatra,
Justice,
Patna High Court,
Patna

I expressed my gratitude to him but said no. I did not want to go from a peaceful job to that troublesome place. I had received the same proposal from him a few years later. I asked to be excused again.

My stay at Patna passed off peacefully in this manner.

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# Patna Again

Ranganath's house had already been constructed at Tulsipur by the time I returned to Cuttack in 1966 October. The housewarming *puja* was held three days later on 23.10.66. He left the rented house at Kesharpur. The office shifted to his new house in a month. The office had been started at the house at Chandnichowk in 1937. Ranganath worked with me in that office ever since he started practicing law. The office continued to function thereafter I left for Patna. I could have practiced law at the Cuttack High Court on my return. I could have done chamber practice too. The office would have continued as before in that case. But I decided against it. Judges do not practice after retirement anywhere else in the world except India. The pension of judges in other countries is much higher than the same in India. In America, the pension is the same as the salary. It is three-fourth of the salary in England. A few judges take up practice after retirement for a livelihood as the pension amount is small in India. Sometimes, they do it to pass their time. However, this is the wrong thing to do. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of U.S.A. had been amazed to see a few retired High Court judges in the bar association of the Supreme Court. The judges of the Supreme Court are forbidden to practice according to the Constitution of India. The same rule should be made applicable to the judges of the High Court. Parity would be maintained in that case with the international practice. Our rule says that a judge appointed on a permanent basis in a High Court can practice in all other High Courts and the Supreme Court except the court where he was a judge. There is no mention of chamber practice anywhere. It is often seen that judges get themselves registered as senior advocates when they retire. However, they are forbidden to prefix their names with the word 'Justice' or 'Former Justice' in their letterheads.

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The congress party ruled in Orissa at the time of my return to Cuttack. Sadashiv Tripathy was the Chief Minister and Dinabandhu Sahoo was the advocate general. The assembly election was in the offing. Dinabandhu wanted to contest the election. He was not only an M.L.A. earlier; he was a minister too. He could not contest the election if he did not resign as the advocate general. Sadashiv Tripathy and Dinabandhu Sahoo pestered me to act as the advocate general. Khalil Ahmed, a close friend of mine and who had come from Patna as the Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court, joined them. The three of them pressurized me to such an extent that I had to give in. I decided to work only as the advocate general and not practice otherwise. The office had been shifted from the Chandnichowk house to the Tulsipur house along with the books, cupboards and furniture. I felt like a fish out of water to work as the advocate general. Chief Justice Khalil Ahmed hosted a sumptuous tea party to felicitate me. Sweets had been ordered from Calcutta for the purpose. I found others to be in a happy state of mind although I myself was distraught. A dispute between the government and the High Court relating to the appointment and transfer of the district judges arose which came to the High Court in the form of a writ petition. I had to plead that the government had the authority to appoint and transfer the judges. Khalil Ahmed appointed J.P. Mitra, a barrister and retired judge from Calcutta to conduct the case on behalf of the High Court. Barrister Birendra Mohan Patnaik assisted him. Some amount of bitterness was created along with some curiosity in the case. Finally, two out of the three judges on the bench gave the verdict in favour of the High Court. Justice Satyabhushan Burman had given a contrary opinion. Justice Gatikrushna Mishra had concurred with Khalil Ahmed.

The congress party lost the elections. Dinabandhu lost too. Rajendra Narayan Singhdeo became the chief minister. He appointed Ashok Das as the advocate general. He did not observe the minimum courtesy of informing me about the new appointment. Ayodhyanath Khosla was the Governor of Orissa at the time. I had written him a letter about it. Radhanath Babu published it in his newspaper 'The Samaj' without my knowledge. Consequently, the newspapers of Calcutta and Patna carried the news. The opinions expressed in these papers were not very flattering for the Government of Orissa. Governor Khosla had been generous enough to write me a personal letter. A journalist (not from Cuttack) wanted to publish the letter. It had taken all my persuasive powers to dissuade him from doing so.

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A few days after this incident, I received a letter from Patna to give my consent to act as a judge in the High Court again. According to the Constitution, the President of India may request a retired judge to take charge as an acting judge if he considered it necessary. I was not bound to give my consent. But it would have been indecent to refuse the offer while I was still active. I gave my consent and went to Patna again for two more years. Narasimham was the chief justice. He left as the chairman of the SAIL Commission and Satish Chandra Mishra was appointed as the Chief Justice. Mishra wanted me to continue for one more year after my term was over. But I had had enough of it and did not want to continue there any longer. I could not have refused had the matter gone to the level of the President of India.

I was again immersed in work as before on reaching Patna. The only difference was that I stayed in a bungalow on the Serpentine Road and not on the Bailey Road. I had to take charge of a Commission a few days after my arrival. There was widespread complaint and dissatisfaction over the distribution of residential plots under the Patna Municipality by the Patna Improvement Trust. The state government appointed a one-man commission under me to make an inquiry into the matter. I did that work in the court room during the afternoons. I did my usual work in the court in the morning hours. Nityanananda Kanungo had come as the Governor at the time of the submission of the Report. This was one of those rare cases where a Commission's Report was accepted by the government and acted upon immediately. Allotment of land to a few ministers, high officials and influential people had been cancelled. Land was distributed in the New Colony as per the formula suggested in the report of the commission. The commission received approval from the general public. It gave me a great deal of satisfaction.

I left Patna finally in the middle of 1969.

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# COMMONWEALTH'S HOSPITALITY

I had received the hospitality of the Commonwealth for nine days from May 11 to 19 of 1967 under the aegis of the British Council of India. I stayed at the famous Waldorf Hotel. It was close to the office of the Indian High Commission in London. I heard that Jawaharlal Nehru stayed there during his trips to London. I met A. Lovelock and C.J. Davis of the Commonwealth Office on reaching the Heathrow. Miss H.I. Kaplan, the daughter of a senior barrister who worked in the Commonwealth Office, had accompanied them. She was my friend, philosopher and guide for the next nine days. She arrived every morning before nine with the office car or a taxi at the hotel. We had to move from one place to another according to a pre-determined schedule which was strictly adhered to. An inflexible schedule had been put in place even for guests! Miss Kaplan dropped me at the hotel in the evening and hurried back to home or office—perhaps to write the report of the day.

I had been invited by S.S. Hurdon, a high ranking officer, for tea at the central office on the first afternoon. Five of us had a long chat among ourselves. Everyone was well informed. They were abreast of all the news about India before and after Independence. Hurdon handed over a sheaf of papers to me containing my programme schedule. I was exhausted. So I put them in my bag without going through them.

Kaplan said that we would go to the law courts when we started out the next morning. It was nearby and she suggested that we walk there. I

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thought she would show me around the court rooms and the compound. I was in for one of the biggest surprises of my life on reaching the place. A judge of the highest court of the land was present in the portico to receive me. I was introduced to others after that. I was given a quiet welcome. I was overwhelmed with joy when I was asked to sit with the judges in the court. I had never imagined that I would sit one day on the Queen's Bench of England. The courtesy of the judges and the barristers present in the court overwhelmed me when I sat on the bench. The High Courts of our country have been established with the British courts as role models. We have all along considered the precedents of the British courts to be incontrovertible. An inconsequential person like me indeed felt gratified to sit in that court. I was felicitated after that at a lunch at Gray's Inn hosted by Attorney General Sir Elwin Jones. All the judges and the Queen's Counsels had joined the lunch. I was humility personified. Fate had indeed been kind to me. No one could excel the English in showing courtesy. The newspapers carried the report the next day with the caption 'Bihar High Court Judge on the Queen's Bench'. I believed this had given me more happiness and fulfillment than I had got in being appointed a judge.

The main building of the Royal Courts of Justice had been constructed in 1882. There has been a lot of expansion since then. Forty four courts sit there now. There are eleven hundred rooms in the huge building. The High Court has three divisions. One is the Queen's Bench. It is known as the King's Bench during the reign of a king. The second one is known as the Chancery Division. The third is probate, divorce and admiralty. This is the Supreme Court for civil suits. The privy council and the House of Lords come after that. They belong to a different class. The appeals relating to criminal cases are tried in the central criminal court at Old Bailey.

One of the judges asked me at lunch about Sir A.T. Harris, the former chief justice of the Patna High Court. He used to work with him as a junior barrister when Harris practiced law. Harris was unmarried. He was a man of high calibre. He was as brilliant as he was realistic. He had become the chief justice of the Calcutta High Court towards the end of his days. He had also accepted the responsibility of being an advisor on constitutional matters to the West Bengal Government on the request of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Ray, the then chief minister. He passed away there. Everyone had been amused that day at lunch when I narrated a funny incident about Harris. Harris had come to Cuttack once to the circuit court. A case of mine was listed in his court. A husband had assaulted his

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wife. The enemies of the husband had tricked the wife to file a case against him and he had been fined. I had filed a revision petition against the punishment in the High Court. I argued that husbands assaulted wives all over the world. This had been condoned by society and was part of family life. This was especially prevalent among the weaker sections of the society. It was also not rare in high society. Everyone laughed in the court when I cited the examples of three English plays where the husband had quarreled with and assaulted the wife. The unmarried Harris commented, "I have no experience of that either in my country or in this country." There was another round of laughter in court. Finally, my client was held innocent.

I went around with B. Cox, the librarian of the Gray's Inn. We went then to the Law Society on the Chancery Lane. It is a huge organization. Twenty one thousand solicitors practice there after becoming its members. The Law Society undertakes the responsibility of their education and training. No one could become a solicitor without the society's approval. A solicitor does all the legal work outside the court. They have the sole right to draft documents. They also provide facts to the barristers at the time of hearing. J.M.D. Hoil, the assistant secretary of the Law Society, explained everything to me.

A special guide joined us the day we went to the Parliament. It is known as the Palace of Westminister. William II had built the Westminister Hall in 1097 A.D when he was the King of England. Its size had been increased towards the end of the 14$^{th}$ century. Sir Charles Berry had reconstructed it when a fire engulfed it in 1834 as a result of which a major part of the old structure had been destroyed. The House of Commons chamber had been destroyed because of bombing by the enemies in May 1941 during the Second World War. It was reconstructed in 1950 and the old shape was restored. The Parliament includes the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The customs of centuries are still maintained. Efforts have been made to constitute the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha in our country in the same mould. A discussion on the European Common Market was in progress when I was there. A few parliament secretaries were dislodged from their positions when they voted with the opposition. Thirty six members of the labour party voted against the common market. There was pandemonium in the House of Commons; but the members seemed to be restrained and courteous.

I was taken around the privy council by its Registrar on the sixteenth. The court was not in session. It was just the opposite of what I had

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thought. It did not look like a court room. The members (judges) and barristers sat opposite each other across a table in a small hall. The privy council had been formed to advise the King. Appeals went to the privy council after the trial in the High Court before the Federal Court had been established in India. The decisions of the council were appreciated everywhere because of the analysis made and judgments delivered. The same procedure was applicable in many parts of the British Empire. I recalled having sent a case to the privy council when I practiced as a lawyer. The library was huge and well-maintained. The members were efficient, experienced and elderly.

I had seen the Art Gallery, Oxford University, Cambridge University, theatres, etc. on my earlier visits. I got an opportunity to see all these from a different perspective with the help of officers attached to me. In the process, I could know more about each of these.

The headquarters of the English Speaking Union is in the Dartmouth House in London. Colonel Sir Stewart Malinson, the Governor of the Union, had arranged a lunch in my honour. Many old and young men and women had been invited. There was more drinking rather than eating at these places. I joined with a glass of lemonade or cidar to be social as I did not drink alcoholic beverages. I said no when alcoholic beverages were offered to me. No one really bothered if you were a teetotaler. Something unusual took place that day at the luncheon. Toasts are a part of a formal lunch. The leader raises a glass of soft drink to wish success to the organization and he is followed by all the others present there who do likewise. However, a toast is raised to the Queen before the toast for the organization. As I was the chief guest at the luncheon, I had to lead the group. I said, "A toast to *the* Queen ...." Others followed me by saying, "... *our* Queen." Then I offered a toast to the English Speaking Union. Then the Governor offered a toast to the Patna branch of the union. He offered a toast to me too. I had seen a few people to be a bit taken aback when I said *the* Queen in stead of *our* Queen. I explained to Sir Stewart that the Queen of Britain was no longer the Queen of Independent India when he queried about the deviation. I told him that it would be improper for a citizen of Independent India to address the Queen of Britain as our Queen. A few people smiled at me and I hoped that I had perhaps made my point. I could know later that the matter had been reported to the Commonwealth Office. Senior Information Officer S.S. Hurdon informed me about it at lunch on my last day.

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My guide took me one day to the Citizen Advice Bureau. It had been started in 1939 to extend help (not financial) to the citizens. There were 460 such centres operating in England, Scotland and Wales at the time. About ten lakh people were provided assistance by the bureau every year for which they did not have to pay anything. Help is provided to solve personal and familial problems. The office expenses are borne by the municipality. Men and women act as volunteers to provide assistance to the needy. Mostly retired people take up this job although I found a few young men and women examining the problems of people enthusiastically. These people had not found any job until then for a living. They were getting unemployment allowance and spent their time by helping others. People came to the bureau to find solutions to all kinds of problems like family discords, filing of income tax returns and so forth. The people from the bureau sometimes visited people at their homes when they were ill. The volunteers were assigned duty on specific dates and times, and they came to the bureau and waited for people seeking help at the appointed times. The work went on continuously. The volunteers were empathetic. Mrs. A. Hawkins, the Chief of the Bureau, showed me the relevant papers and explained how people got so much benefit in a short time without having to spend any money. This is what public service is all about.

I saw an example of municipality administration in the Greater London Council. It covers an area of 620 square miles. Eighty lakh people come under its purview. The council was brought into existence on April 1, 1965 after dissolving all the smaller county municipalities that operated earlier. The small county of the historic City of London was the only exception. Sir William Hart of the Greater London Council along with R. Anstice and D.O. Robinson explained the daily work of the council to me. I was amazed to see how the snow from the streets, trash from the homes and the markets, abandoned furniture and other rubbish were quietly transferred to other places and recycled to make them useful again. I recalled how women sweepers carried faeces on their heads and walked on the streets during daytime at Cuttack.

The Mixed Comprehensive School at Bellingham is a different kind of school. It is a huge institution. There were men and women of all ages. They were engaged in different kinds of work. Studying, singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, drawing, exercising and a host of other activities went on at different places simultaneously. Some sat under the trees, some in open fields and some inside the rooms. It was difficult to distinguish between the teacher and the taught. There was unbounded joy

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everywhere. I found about twenty five young, unwed mothers playing with their children at one place. A slide show was going on for the entertainment of the children. What efforts were being made for the people and the future! I could not help thinking about the situation in our country. J.E. Brown, the headmaster of the school, treated us to a lunch. He was deeply involved with the school. As if that was his only mission in life! His wife and daughter too were engaged in the school. There were no strikes by the students or any demonstrations by the teachers. These things were beyond their imagination.

I was stunned to see another institution. It was the geriatric home. It is situated in Essex and is known as the Bennet Lodge. There were sixty two old men and women. Two couples were more than ninety years old. They were unable to walk. It was a double storied building. Health facilities were being provided round the clock. Matrons and nurses attended on them without grudge. They ran to anyone who rang the bell. They carried the old people affectionately to their bath. Everyone got together at lunch and for the evening entertainment. Untiring efforts were on to take care of the aged. I talked to a few inmates. They were grateful for the love and service they got. They kept waiting for X'Mas when their relatives would visit them. I wanted to know how the expenses were met. The inmates or their children paid a part of the expenses every month. The rest came from government grants and charitable institutions. Numerous private individuals contributed on a reguar basis. This is a yardstick of civilization.

The geriatric home in Maxon Croft was different. It is managed by the London Bureau of Lambeth. Twenty one flats under its management are occupied by elderly people who could still take care of themselves. They lived separately but dined together. Each of them took part in community work. Mrs. Molner was its matron. She considered each inmate to be a member of her own family. She was extremely kindhearted. She did not work for money. She worked to ensure a smile on everyone's face. V. Sergold was the Officer-In-Charge of the Residential Homes. I was a foreigner who was there for a day. But he explained everything to me in great detail as if the institution depended on me for its survival.

The experience of those nine days gave me an unforgettable experience that I cherish even now. I have been to London several times after that visit. But no other visit had provided me with such a rich and varied experience.

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# Foreign Visits

I cherished a desire since a long time to visit different countries. I started from Calcutta in May 1967. My eldest son Pravat advised me before buying tickets to go to the east first, and move to America, Europe and Russia after that. The journey was long and I had to stop at a number of places. The foreign exchange available from the Reserve Bank was just about enough to take care of the hotel expenses and the incidentals. I was going alone. So I had to decide about hotel reservations at different places in advance to avoid being put into trouble. Air France of Calcutta had helped me in making these arrangements. I had to spend one week at Lake Placcid in America in connection with the rotary club during the period. Some money had been made available to me from that source too. I started on my trip planning to spend about two months in different countries. It took me slightly longer than that. The three principal countries in the east were the Philippines, Thailand and Japan. The stamp of America is clear on the first two countries. Guides surrounded me to take me to different places the moment I checked into a hotel at Bangkok. The guides could not take much advantage of me as I had collected information earlier about the places to visit and the distance between the places. The hotels provided detailed information about conducted tours. Things become easier if one took advantage of such tours. Twenty to twenty five visitors from different countries and speaking different languages are taken on a conducted tour. The seats were comfortable. The guides are licenced and they speak English. The guide describes historical and geographical facts as well as folklores. The expenses were less too. This is an easy way to see all the tourist spots within a short time. I spent the first morning in one such tour. There was another tour in the evening to see the well-lit buildings,

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parks, lakes, fleet of boats, folk dances, etc. I took that opportunity. I went alone the second day to see the High Court, assembly, libraries, art galleries, museums, etc. I went around the markets the next day. I left Bangkok early in the morning next day. This was my schedule in all the places. I had stayed for five to seven days at Tokyo, New York, London, Paris, Nice, Berlin and Moscow. I stayed for three nights each at places like Bangkok, Manila, Honolulu, Los Angeles, St. Louis, San Francisco, Chicago, Washington, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Munich, Stuttgart, Athens, Vienna, Frankfurt, Dusseldorf, etc.

The mode of living was almost the same in every city. Boarding and lodging in the hotels were almost similar. The only difference lay in the price. There is no emphasis on the local flavour. It is easy to get local food, see local habitations and cottage industry products everywhere. I have taken advantage of these everywhere. If one missed these, he cannot really appreciate the true worth of a place. No country has been left untouched because of the speed of traveling and globalization. Every country has its doors open for foreign tourists. No one wants to hurt the sentiments of the tourists and everyone wants to make them feel at home. In the process, an effort is made to hide the true state of affairs in a country, and live in an environment that would be approved by all visitors. Every country tries to earn more and more money by exporting goods to other countries. Everyone has been swayed by globalization. Only the national borders are sacrosanct. Everyone wears an overcoat in cold countries which hides most of the features of a person. As a result, everyone looks alike. Similarly, every country tries to bring about certain features of international standards to the fore, and in the process, the local tradition and customs are perforce pushed back. The latter have become almost nonexistent among the aristocratic class. One has to look for them in backward places. Everyone is besotted with mechanization. Many countries follow developed countries blindly and do not balk at sacrificing their own culture without a second thought. Unfortunately, their newly adopted dispositions are only skin-deep and can be seen through by discerning eyes. The situation is the same in our own country. This blind race becomes clear when we go to the museums of all the major cities.

I was amazed to see Ramlila being performed in Bangkok even now. Many people from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh belonging to the milkman caste live there. They are unified in their faith. Their bond with their country of origin is strong. They send money to their families in India *en masse*. Money collected from a large number of people is sent to a few places in India wherefrom it is sent to different villages through some

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messengers. Ultimately, the money reaches the intended family. These people hand over the money to their leader in Bangkok without taking a receipt. There has never been any complaint of the family in India not receiving the money. Faith has played an important role.

There is a river near Bangkok. A fleet of boats carrying different goods for sale keep floating on the water. It is known as the Floating Market. Citizens and tourists throng the place. The long root of a fragrant tree is cut into pieces and sold there. Each piece measures one foot. Many people bought it. A leaflet said that the tree would grow within a year if the root was planted. I bought a piece. I had to carry it in my suitcase for about three months before I returned home. I planted the root but was disappointed.

Manila is the capital city of the Philippines. It is totally under the control of the United States. The High Court and the Bar Association buildings are amazing structures. I had spent half an hour with the head of the country after getting an appointment beforehand.

I reached Tokyo just before the dusk. I was presented with a bunch of blood red roses along with a visiting card the moment I stepped into the Daiichi Hotel. The room in the hotel was small. There were blue tea packets, cups and a flask on the table. There was no milk or sugar. There was no limit on the plain tea one could drink. One had to pay for milk and sugar. I stayed there for six days and went around many places. I saw the huge Olympics stadia, the gigantic royal palace, fast underground trains, and enjoyed the leisurely dance and soft music of more than one Kabuki plays on a very wide stage. The lilting songs, steadfast eyes and thousands of absolutely quiet spectators created contrary feelings. People live in small houses that look picturesque. The houses are spick and span with everything in its place. It does not look as if a family lives there. Everyone is free to adopt any religion he prefers. I found an engineer to be a Buddhist. His wife (according to the version of the husband) is a Christian half the time and an atheist the other half. The unmarried daughter has embraced Islam following her fiancée. The Japanese are mostly dressed in European clothes. Most people are under forty. They love their own food. They have a strong sense of time and discipline. Japan had been virtually destroyed in the Second World War unlike other countries. Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been bombed and everything had been razed to the ground there. I had visited Japan only twenty years after the War. No one would believe that the country had been defeated in the War if one judged by its cities or other places. No other country or nation has been able to equal them in restoration work in so short a time.

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I went to see a manufacturing organization. The gentleman who received me from my car and took me around the factory was its chief executive. I learnt about it only at the time of taking leave from him after he very kindly offered me tea in his office. He was wearing an overall on his clothes like everyone else. He walked leisurely through the factory explaining the nitty-gritty of the production process and how they kept their costs to the minimum. A group of twenty women sat on the floor and did some work with their hands in some of the rooms. We went inside the rooms and the chief executive explained what the women were doing. None of the women raised her head to look at us or greet the chief executive. I was told that they had been instructed to concentrate on their work. Things are different in our factories. Small things are magnified and there are arguments back and forth.

During my stay there the newspapers reported that the elections had been concluded the day before. I had not been aware of it in the least. There were no posters on the streets or lightposts anywhere. I was told that posters could be put up only at specified places. The posters had to be removed after the elections by the person who had put them up. Campaigning by loudspeakers on the streets was strictly prohibited. These people are as willing to make sacrifices for the sake of discipline as they are dispassionate while committing hara-kiri.

I had gone to see a large waterfall at nine in the morning one day. I was scheduled to stay there till the afternoon. Three buses arrived there about fifteen minutes later. About two hundred boys and girls aged between 2 and 5 came out of the bus in queues like molten ore pouring out in a steel plant. Everyone was dressed alike. There were twenty women caretakers along with them. They looked like flowers in full bloom. They were more spectacular than the waterfall. Two of them could converse in English. They told me that three more buses had taken other children to four other places. One was a doctor and another was a nurse from among the caretakers. They took more care of the children than they might be getting in their homes. The future of a nation is built in a planned manner and not through making promises in election speeches which are never meant to be honoured as it happens in our country. Such expensive entertainment of the children is meant for everyone, be they rich, poor, able or handicapped. Japan did not spend large sums of money on defense activities. Therefore, there was no dearth of money for developmental activities.

I had to go for dinner to someone's house. He had given me the address. I went by the underground train. I could not locate the house and

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returned to the hotel. I informed them of my inability over the telephone. The instruction was repeated about the route I should take. I also heard the taunting laughter of the young girl who spoke to me over the telephone. It was not unexpected. How could a judge of a civilized country not find his way at seven in the evening in the well-lit city of Tokyo? I cursed myself and went out again. I prayed the gods that I should not be humiliated again. Mercifully, a couple on the streets helped me out. As the door opened, the lady of the house said with a smile, "People of your country can find their way to the top of Mount Everest. And you could not find the way to this place?" I said brazenly, "The way to the Everest is on the mountains. The way to your house is under the ground." There was a round of laughter. But I was a bit ashamed of myself deep within me. It was eleven in the night by the time I returned. I might have lost the way again if the couple would not have been kind enough to drop me at the underground station. I was to take leave of Tokyo the next morning.

Honolulu was a beautiful place. Hundreds of men and women lay on the beach for sunbathing with the minimum possible clothes on their body. Given a choice, they would have discarded those too. They spent their days on the beach and the evenings in discotheques. A dollar-hungry person like me only stared at them with his mouth agape. One part of the city is thickly populated by the Japanese. There was a huge banyan tree outside my hotel. I was amazed to see the plaque nailed to the tree. A part of the world famous, huge banyan tree from the Shibpur Botanical Garden of Calcutta had been taken there. I found my indirect connection with Honolulu. I could not compose poems. But I took time off to read some poems sitting under the tree.

The huge stone arch of Saint Louis is famous. It is the largest in the world. The stay there was enjoyable because of a friend who I knew through correspondence. He and his wife became my guide for a day. I had my food in their house. Two other days were passed in other programmes. My friend told me bluntly that he could not spare more than one day for me. Such plain speaking is rare in our country. But they are used to it. The speaker has no hesitation in speaking his mind. The listener feels offended.

San Francisco is a city of highs and lows. The charter of the United Nations had been signed there after the Second World War. The inkpot, pen and paper used for the purpose have been still preserved there. Like a huge banyan tree coming out of a small seed, the United Nations now covers the entire world in quest of peace. The huge stone cross on a hillock

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is another spectacular thing to be seen. There is no other cross which is equal in size or bigger than it in the christian world. It is adored by everyone from the point of view of religion and art.

A storm was in the offing one night while I was in Chicago. The windows and doors slammed to warn us about the storm. The siren went off. The hotel boys moved from room to room to reassure the guests. They handed over chocolates—was it the Last Supper? I had no idea when the dawn arrived. People greeted each other at breakfast that they had survived the storm. There are a large number of Negroes in Chicago. The tourists are scared of them because of their huge shapes and rough behaviour. The huge lake and the buildings are spectacular. The Rotary Club had been started here on February 23, 1905 by a lawyer. Three friends had helped him set it up in a small room on the Dearborn Street in Ivanston. His name was Paul Harris. He was a non-entity earlier. He had formed the club with three of his friends to meet once a week. The club was named rotary as it met in turn in the offices of the four friends. Paul Harris passed away in 1947. The rotary international was already a huge organization by that time. It has now spread to all countries of the world except the communist countries. The communists are also gradually coming into its fold. It is the biggest non-government, international service organization of the world. It gives the maximum number of scholarships to educate young men and women outside their countries. Its major objective is to establish fraternity and peace among mankind. It has contributed significantly to the total eradication of Polio from the world. A rotary district has been formed taking Orissa and a part of Madhya Pradesh. The rotary clubs under its purview engage in providing different kinds of services as per central direction. Several programmes have been undertaken to promote discipline, service mentality, generosity towards mankind and peace among the youth. The headquarters of the rotary are located in Ivanston in Chicago. It was as good as a pilgrimage for me to be there. Chicago is now famous in the world for constructing the tallest building of the world on the bank of the lake. This building overtook the Empire State Building of New York in height. The head reels when one stands on the street and looks up at it. The head goes into a spin when one goes up and looks down. Of course, it happens to only rustics like me.

Washington is the capital city of the United States. Everything should be huge in proportion there. I was overwhelmed by the courtesy of the Chief Justice of the Federal Supreme Court. I had met him briefly and we had a bit of acquaintance when he had come on a visit to India. He asked

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me to come to the Supreme Court when I greeted him over telephone. It was an unexpected opportunity for me. I found the court having a holiday that day. The chief justice had been sitting, waiting for me. I felt a bit embarrassed. He was calm. There was a beautiful paper-cutting knife on his table. I picked it up and examined it. He asked me if I had been amazed. I was indeed amazed at such a question. I had not noticed until then that the knife had been made in Japan. He told me that America was full of Japanese stuff as they were relatively cheaper. American industrialists have started setting up units in Japan as the production cost was less there. I was even more amazed when he picked up a bunch of keys to take me around the Supreme Court. He opened the doors and switched the lights on himself. He closed and locked the doors himself too. There were dozens of errand boys in our courts. It is beyond imagination in our country that a judge would pick up a bunch of keys and do such menial work. The man was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States after all. Through his direct labour, he demonstrated to me that day that all men were equal. The tour went on for about half an hour. I took leave of him after acknowledging my gratitude and paying him my respects.

The White House and the Capitol building are among the structures that must be seen. I had seen them on an earlier trip. I went around them more meticulously again.

New York was tiring. Unless one holds a larger perspective, too many sights tired your mind. I was staying at the Plaza Hotel near the Central Park. One had to think big in New York. I found all the copies of Amrita Bazar Patrika from the date of publication in a library. They converted books and newspapers into microfilms when the space was not enough. Parking cars is one of the most difficult things in New York. A friend had telephoned that he would come to meet me. I waited forty five minutes for him and thought he had changed his mind. I received a message over telephone at this time that he was at the door. He had been moving around the hotel for about an hour to park his car. He would pay a fee to park; but there was no space available. The petrol expenses did not hurt them. Otherwise, who would move around for an hour to find a parking place? New York came twice on this trip. I went around the parks one whole day. The elderly spent a major part of their day in parks. The same was the case with the children. Young men and women came rarely. They were more interested in discotheques, restaurants, theatres and concerts. There was enough scope for entertainment in the parks. One could spend a long time there if he wished. I sat on a bench in one of the parks. Three

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other people were already sitting there. One was an old man. The other two were husband and wife. They were middle-aged. The old man was the father of a young woman. He had come to see America with his daughter and son-in-law. He told me that he was tired of crowds in New York. Hotels, shops, cinema halls, etc. were full of people. The streets were full of cars. He lived in a quiet place thirty miles away from Madrid which was inhabited by about a hundred people. In course of our conversation, he fondly recalled Kalimpong near Darjeeling. He had spent thirty five years in India as a missionary. He had also stayed in a house in front of the Stewart School on the Mission Road at Cuttack for some time. He recalled Cuttack Chandi, the leper colony, Mission Press, Mission School, Rev. Brajananda Das, Isaac Samantaray and so forth when he found that I was from Cuttack. I was elated to hear Oriya masons and carpenters being praised by someone in the Central Park of New York. His daughter asked about the best time of the year to visit India. The old man said that all the six seasons of the year could be experienced in different places of India at the same time. We took chestnuts together, exchanged addresses and took leave of each other. I thought the world was indeed a small place. Madrid and New York were perhaps less distant from Cuttack than Biswanathpur. Neighbours could be found everywhere if you have the inclination to look for them.

No one left New York without visiting the United Nations. The road to the place is uphill. The flags of different countries hit the eyes from a distance. I had some advantage over the other tourists because of my identity card. A junior officer separated me from the others. He took me around on a tour for three hours. He introduced me to the Secretary General, gave me coffee and showed me the room and the chair used by Vijaylaxmi Pandit when she was the president. He showed me the place from which Krishna Menon had given his marathon speech. He took me to the Security Council and explained how the veto was applied. He took me to the UNESCO and the WHO. He gave me coffee again and took leave of me. I had no idea why he took my photograph.

One had to go to an island on a boat to see the Statue of Liberty. One cannot see the image without craning his neck. The image has been placed on a very high pedestal with a lamp in its hand. Ladders are available if one wanted to take a closer look.

My name was being announced over the loudspeaker at the Copenhagen airport. It said that Mrs. Herelef was waiting for me. Her husband was in the film business. He had come to Orissa a few years ago

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to shoot a documentary on the Konark Temple. He had stayed in my house at Cuttack. He was a happy-go-lucky kind of man. He kept fiddling with his camera all the time. He became so friendly with my wife and children in an hour that he lived like a member of the family for the next fifteen days. He filmed the pictures drawn by my wife with powdered and coloured rice before the deities in the *puja* room on Thursdays and Mini's (Suchitra) dance recital. He went to the Konark from Cuttack via Pipili with Baby (Pravat). On the way, he took pictures of inconsequential things like bullock carts, everyday chores of local people and small boys plucking mangoes from the roadside trees. He assimilated all these with the unusual folklores about the Konark to make an outstanding film. Baby was his friend, philosopher and guide during the trip. His daughter and son-in-law came to India after his return home. They stayed a few days with us at Cuttack. The girl kissed me on the cheek near the gate at the time of taking leave just as she would have kissed her father. My clerk Harekushna and my gardener were amazed to see the scene. I was embarrassed too. Herelef knew that I was coming to Copenhagen. But I had never expected that his wife would take the trouble of picking me up from the airport. I had to go to the hotel. We took a taxi. We dropped the luggage at the hotel and went out for sightseeing. My friend's wife realized then that she had left her handbag in the taxi. The keys to her house were in the bag. For that matter, ladies carry virtually all their possessions in their bags. They love their handbags more than their homes. The police was duly informed. We did not have the number of the taxi or the name of the driver. We went out in another taxi. The wireless kept on announcing repeatedly that a ladies handbag had been left in a taxi at ten in the morning. A request was being made to leave the handbag at my hotel. We found the handbag with the reception when we returned to the hotel at two in the afternoon. Everything was intact. I wondered if this was possible in our country.

Mrs. Herelef informed me that her husband had gone out of the city on some work and would return in the evening. I had to go and stay in their house. Perhaps, they wanted to return my hospitality. I went with her. It was a small house with two small rooms and a bathroom. Two third of the bathroom had been taken in by suitcases and film rolls that had stretched to the roof. The basin and the commode occupied the rest of the space. One had to go to the community bath at the end of the street if he needed a bath. Clothes were taken to a machine to be washed. They cooked in an electric oven on one side of the drawing room. Most of the food were precooked and stored in packets. It was heated up before eating. There were two beds in the only bedroom with a cupboard and a dressing

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table. There was just enough space left for one person to move around. I stayed there for two days without having a bath. But I was gratified by the kindness of the husband and the wife.

The people of Amsterdam use the maximum number of bicycles in the world. Large and thick logs stick out from the top of all the houses on the beach. The ships were earlier being tied to those logs when they anchored. It has been mechanized now.

I found shelves of palm leaf manuscripts in a room behind a bronze image on the first floor of the university. There was no possibility of dirt, water, air or human hand touching them. I thought about our museums. Our invaluable manuscripts lie in a wretched condition in the museums. We make an effort to retrieve them from being destroyed. But we hardly take enough care to preserve them for posterity.

Boating in the canal is a cherished desire of the tourists there. One can spend the whole day and even nights on the boats. One can enjoy food, music, dance, etc. on the boats. One only needs to have enough money. I could afford not more than three hours on a boat on my budget. The Philips Company is well known in our country for electrical appliances. Its headquarters at Amsterdam is a spectacular structure. Various kinds of cheese with different taste, colour and fragrance are available. The smell of the expensive blue cheese is unbearable for uninitiated people like us. Eating it was out of question. There is an island if one travels twenty miles by a motor boat into the sea. A milkman colony from the ancient time is still there untouched by civilization. The milkmen and milkwomen wear oldfashioned clothes and keep waiting to be greeted by the tourists. It was an enjoyable experience.

I had gone to Stuttgart in Germany only to meet my nephew Lakhu (Laxminarayan Dash, airconditioning engineer). He was working there after finishing his studies. I wanted to persuade him to come back to India. He had come to the airport. I stayed at a hotel. He ordered drinks without any hesitation when we had dinner together. He was undecided about his course of action when I did not drink. I persuaded him to have his drink. He left his habit behind on his return to India.

I went to Dusseldorf to greet a Sikh friend of mine. He had built a house to enable him to look at the open sky through the glass roof of his drawing room. He was in another country when I reached there. He had requested a friend of his from Bombay to take care of me. I was disappointed. I thought he did not care for me even though I had thought of him as my own. But I stayed there for three days. The gentleman from

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Bombay was a businessman who manufactured ply boards. He was constantly engaged in his business. I went around the factory on my own.

I tried to go to East Berlin after reaching West Berlin. One city had been divided into two parts after the second world war. There was an iron fence between the two parts. East Berlin was under the occupation of the Russians. The administration on the two sides was also different. Many people had been shot dead in the process of trying to meet their relatives across the border. My judgeship helped me. I got the permission to visit East Berlin for twelve hours. There was no difference between the two parts. The Heidelberg University was on the other side. Bihar Governor Zakir Hussain and Dr. Sriram Chandra Dash of Cuttack had taken their degrees from the University. I spent some time in that institution. I could see people glancing at each other with fear in their eyes and using signals to express themselves as I was having lunch at the university cafeteria. I was told on my return to West Berlin in the evening that spies in plain clothes kept tabs on people in restaurants, cinema halls, shops and every other conceivable place to find people seeking asylum in West Berlin. How could a civilized world tolerate such attacks on blood relations! Hitler started the second world war from Berlin. The last signs of the war can also be found in Berlin. Iron fencing and war prison! Only one prisoner had been kept inside the prison located in a dense forest. I went to its doorstep. On my return path I wondered who had actually won the war.

The city of Munich is full of factories. The operations of the municipality there are worth seeing. The armoury and the arms and ammunitions are mindboggling. I bought a dagger as a memento. I recalled an amusing anecdote while taking leave from Germany. It is said a single Englishman opens a shop; two Englishmen trade when they get together and three Englishmen together build an empire. One German makes machine parts; two Germans build a factory and three Germans start a war when they get together. One Indian talks about philosophy; two Indians hold the installation ceremony of a deity and three Indians start a new caste or community.

One can never have enough of Paris. Paris takes on a different hue after ten in the evening. One day I courted trouble by going to a university outside the city. I had gone by a taxi. No taxi or bus was available for the return journey. I asked a few people but was advised to wait. I started walking with a man looking for a lift when I could find nothing to take me back to the hotel. I asked him about the lack of communication facilities.

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He stared at me like I was stupid. He explained my mistake to me. I should have kept the taxi waiting for me if I came by a taxi or I should have taken a car on hire and driven it myself. All the vehicles plying on the road were private vehicles. My companion was waving his hand at the passing cars. Finally, someone stopped his car on seeing the luggage on his back. My companion explained in French that my need was greater than his. There was no room in the car for more than two. It was not Cuttack that seven persons would squeeze themselves into the space meant for three. The driver stared suspiciously at me. I did not look like a hiker but was waiting for someone else's car. Finally, he took pity on me and carried me till the hotel square. I never ventured out far without making prior arrangement after that experience.

One of my acquaintances took me to a night club. His wife was with him. There was not just nudity there; it was sheer vulgarity in my opinion. There was very little food but drinks were aplenty. Singing was incidental but there was a great deal of wanton dancing. I was amazed how my companions were able to enjoy what they were seeing. Was it because there was no attachment between them?

I went one afternoon to the meeting of the chief rotary club of Paris. I was shown a lot of courtesy as I was the governor of district 325 which had the first rotary club of India (Calcutta) under its wings. I became the chief guest of the meeting. A great deal of love and affection was showered on me in French. I understood very little of what was being spoken. A chartered accountant acted as my interpreter and there was heavy clapping after my speech to show their affection. The text of my speech was inconsequential. The chef's special that day was chicken cooked in wine. It was rarely cooked there. It was said at the vote of thanks that the chef perhaps knew in advance that I was coming and cooked the lunch to felicitate me. There was a round of laughter. The French laughed a great deal without reservation. It is just the opposite of the English. The country is famous for its singing, dancing and painting. They do not drink strong alcoholic beverages. They sip at light wines. Expensive wines do not touch the lips. They roll them on their tongues to enjoy the taste. The waitresses often laughed at me unbelievingly when I ordered water at the hotels. They delivered a bottle of mineral water quietly.

I went to Nice from Paris. It is famous for its beach. Its festival of flowers is also famous throughout the world. Unless one sees it, it is difficult to imagine its grandeur and the madness displayed. Thousands of people gathered on the beach after evening. The flowers begin to gather at

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about nine in the evening. Women come first with basketloads of flowers on their heads. What a fabulous scene it is! A huge covering made of flowers envelopes the women from their waist upwards. Loads of flowers follow on bicycles, motorbikes, cars, trucks, buses, horse-drawn carriages, hand-pulled carts, etc. The fragrance floats around for miles. The spectators welcome the arrival of the flowers with handclapping and cries of joy. They keep throwing paper flowers at everyone whether they know them or not. One has to see the festival to believe that so many flowers can bloom at one place on earth at the same time. People come from different countries to see the festival. Tourists throng the place. It is said that one has to see the festival once during the lifetime to have a sense of fulfillment in life. It is as good as seeing the Vamana (Lord Jagannath) on the chariot at the time of the car festival at Puri. Celebrations go on throughout the night. Lots of flowers keep floating on the sea at dawn. There are no waves there. The flowers lie on the water. There are thousands of chairs on the beach. One can enjoy the sun or the scene on the beach as he desires. The rent for the chairs is nominal. There are no collectors. Boxes with slits have been placed at different places. One has to drop the coins through the slits. I did not find anyone cheating.

Monte Carlo is near Nice. It's a small hilly area on the beach. It looks like a hill station in India. There is a quiet building close to the beach. It's a blot on the civilized world. The rich and famous come here to gamble in the casino. A few lose the shirt on their back. The pockets of a few other avaricious people get lined. It is the favourite hunting ground of the Agha Khan. It is the ultimate destination for the ultra rich. The acrid fragrance of cigars welcomes one at the doorstep. Taciturn players are seated around the table. Proof of eligibility is needed for entry. Several people had their women escorts with them. Single women playing at the tables are rare.

There is a palace on the hill at Monte Carlo. Tourists went there after the evenings to see the Queen on the balcony on the first floor. They greet her from below. The answer comes by way of a smile and a wave of the hand.

The plane landed near the sea in Athens. There is no other airport located in such close proximity to the sea. I met a group of students while going around the city. Every one was less than ten year old. I asked if anyone knew English. Everyone raised hands by way of an answer. They learnt four languages: the mother tongue, English, French and Spanish or German. But the three-language formula has failed in our country.

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Vienna is a dreamland. People came from all around to listen to orchestras. I have listened to symphonies in Paris, London and New York. But Vienna is in a class by itself. I spent two evenings there. One hundred and sixty eight musicians produce music that resounds through the theatre. The theatre had been destroyed during the second world war. It has been restored to its original glory. The original grandeur of the Konark could be retrieved if we would only make the effort.

The Somnath Temple could be built anew because of the will and efforts of Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel. Several old pyramids had been razed when the Aswan Dam was built in Egypt. The old stones were rearranged to build similar pyramids elsewhere with the help of skilled masons. French architects, engineers and masons are famous for their expertise in retrieval, preservation and renovation of ancient monuments. Monuments like the orchestra house of Vienna and the Westminister Hall of London which had been destroyed or damaged during the second world war had been restored to their original glory through skilled masons. Why can't our Konark be restored to its original shape? There are still enough skilled masons in Orissa to undertake the restoration work.

Biswanath Dash, Harekrushna Mahtab, Radhanath Rath, Nityananda Kanungo and I had submitted a memorandum to President Neelam Sanjiv Reddy regarding this matter. Governor Bhagabat Dayal Sharma forwarded and recommended the memorandum. Pratap Chandra, a minister of the Janata Government then ruling at the centre, came for a spot enquiry. Dr. Mahtab and I discussed the matter with him in the presence of the governor during lunch at the Raj Bhavan. I went to the Konark later with Mr. Chandra. The director general of the Archaeology Department had come from Delhi. Education minister Pradipta Kishore Das, central minister of state Samarendra Kundu and minister of state Biswabhushan Harichandan were also there. A long discussion took place near the temple. Unfortunately, the director general got angry when Samarendra Kundu was rude to him and made caustic comments against him. Pratap Chandra told me later that the work had to be done through the officers and such unusual work could not be initiated if the officers were rubbed the wrong way. In fact, the director general raised several objections. The janata government was dissolved a few days later. Our efforts were thwarted. Janaki Ballav Patnaik was requested several times later both verbally and in writing when the congress formed the government. Nothing came out of it. It is highly unlikely that any step would be taken in this direction in the near future.

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Switzerland is a beautiful country. Three Indians and one Pakistani arrived at the reception of the hotel at Zurich when I reached there. The hotel manager turned them out when one of them made a pass at the young receptionist. They pleaded that it was already late in the night and they did not have another place to stay. But that did not cut any ice with the manager. They went looking for another place. It served them right.

I went to see the waterfall of the rhine river in a conducted tour. The scenery on both sides of the road was breathtaking. One had to enter France on the way. The vehicle stopped there and the guide asked the tourists to take out their visas to France. A few tourists did not have visa for France. The guide asked those people to get down from the bus and wait there till the return journey to Zurich. It was a lonely place. A few tourists took the guide to task for not having told about it earlier. As an elderly lady was getting down from the bus with tears in her eyes, it became known that the guide was having fun at the expense of the tourists. A visa was not needed. The guide handed over an orange to each tourist amid laughter and merrymaking. There was a wooden platform to see the waterfall. A tea stall was there too. The tourists usually sat on the platform for an hour or so with a cup of tea in hand.

Geneva became the meeting place of all nations after the first world war as it was the seat of the League of Nations. No such collective effort had been made earlier to initiate peace in the world. The Geneva Lake captivated the onlooker. I was going there twice every day. Even that did not satiate me. I was thinking about the Chilka Lake. An Indian sitting beside me was talking to his lady companion about the Dal Lake of Srinagar. Many people were having boat rides. I could never manage to get on a boat as I was late every time. The people on the boats were deprived of the pleasure one could get by sitting on the bank.

I recalled Lake Placcid of America at Geneva where I had spent seven days in connection with the rotary. The lake there was surrounded by hills. There were dense trees all around. There is a large hotel there where conferences are held round the year. The rotary international assembly was being held there that year in the month of May. About five hundred men and women from all over the world had gathered there. It gave everyone an opportunity to get acquainted with each other. Some people developed close affinity among themselves.

I had returned via Rome and Egypt when I had gone earlier to Canada, America and Britain. I dropped Rome from my itinerary on this trip and went to Russia. I had arranged the visa at London. There were

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many restrictions on going to Russia. I had to take the help of an organization called Intourist. The Russian currency I got by exchanging dollars and pound sterlings was recorded on my passport. I had to surrender the unspent money while leaving Russia. I would have spent everything had I known about the rule. I had to unnecessarily donate some money to the Russian Government. I knew that Dr. Udaykar Mishra, a Communist activist of Jamshedpur, was ill and being treated in Russia. He was known to me for a long time.

The Moscow airport was plain and unimpressive. The behaviour of the airport officials was rude. I went to my hotel in a taxi. The roads were wide with trees planted on either side. The hotel was not very comfortable considering the money I was paying. There were no carpets in either the lifts or the corridors. The floors were wooden or cemented. I had a feeling that I was being followed by someone. I was not very sure. The first thing I did next morning was to telephone the hospital to get some information about Udaykar. I knew the name of the hospital. I had to furnish all information about myself and my forefathers to the authorities when I telephoned the hospital. Udaykar picked up the telephone after a long time. I could sense that he was embarrassed because of my telephone call. He wanted to know how I got the name of the hospital and who told me about my illness. Finally, he said that his health was improving. He almost had a fit when I said that I would come to visit him at the hospital. He strongly advised me against doing so and said that he would come to the hotel to see me. He did not come in the next six days I spent there. I had no idea what went wrong. An ailing friend would have welcomed such a visit anywhere else.

I had a fleeting view of a three storeyed building being demolished beside the main road as I was passing by in a bus one afternoon. As I passed by the same road the next day at ten in the morning, there was no sign of the structure except an open space. In our country it would have taken a month for the rubble to be removed. I came to know on enquiry that a structure like that could be demolished in six hours by machines. The rubble was picked up swiftly in large truck trailers. Just twelve hours were needed for the clean up act. I have never seen something like that elsewhere.

Each shopkeeper stocked the same kind of things in two places. Goods were available in ration cards in predetermined quantities at one place. Extra quantities could be purchased at the other place by paying four times the price. Tourists got a rebate of about 25 per cent when they bought

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goods by paying American dollars. Russia was at loggerheads with America; but it loved the American currency. A rebate was also available when a tourist furnished a certificate that he wanted to take goods out of Russia. I heard from the other inmates at the hotel that a citizen could buy two pairs of shoes and two dresses on the ration card. Similarly, quantities of foodstuff that could be purchased were also mentioned on the card. More of everything could be bought at the higher price openly. I came to know that professors received the highest salary in the country. Everyone is assured of the minimum necessity to keep the body and soul together. But I had a feeling that people were restive.

I went to the university campus one day on my own and not on any conducted tour. It was full of gardens, lawns, libraries, swimming pools, gymnasiums, etc. The campus was full of students. Everyone understood English although very few spoke the language. I could not go inside the hostels because of certain restrictions. I went on a conducted tour the next day. I could see less than what I had seen the day before. The guide explained in four different languages: English, French, Spanish and Russian. The guide took us around the Red Square minutely. An official function was being held there with all the trimmings.

An inhabitant of Moscow used to share my table at dinner in the dining hall of the hotel. I came to know that he was an engineer. I thought he was of the same rank as our superintending engineers. He specialized in irrigation but was in charge of the parks of Moscow. He wanted to take me to his flat. His wife told him something immediately in Russian. It was, however, decided that I would spend an evening in their flats. He could not keep his promise during my stay although we met three to four times after that. He told me every time that we would go later. Perhaps there were restrictions on taking a foreigner to one's home or one had to get an official permission. He was feeling embarrassed as he was not able to arrange it.

One evening I was alone at my dinner table. Five persons were sitting at the table beside me: father, mother, son, daughter and the prospective husband of the daughter. A plate had been laid on the table for a sixth person. But the place was empty. The mother came to me and asked me in Russian to join them. I looked at them like an idiot. The girl came towards me with a smile on her face. She said they were having a feast that evening and they would be happy if I joined them. I went happily to fill the vacant sixth chair. I did not ask anything about the absentee. Everyone spoke a bit of English except the mother. The daughter was loquacious. It was the

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engagement dinner. They enquired about me. The father was a teacher and the mother worked in a shop. The son was at the university. The daughter had just taken a degree in art and worked as a probationer in an art gallery. The prospective husband of the girl was a doctor. The dinner progressed smoothly enough. Dancing started in the middle of the dining hall. The girl asked me suddenly to dance with her. I had thought it was men who invited girls to dance. The father said that one could not say no to Pany (the name of the girl) that evening. The prospective husband smiled a bit and supported the girl's father. It was the first dance of my life. I neither knew dancing nor understood music. I had to dance with the mother after that. The mother and the daughter were gratified to have danced with a foreigner. The real dance came when Pany danced with her prospective husband for a long, long time. They came several times to the table for their drinks and went back to dancing. The dinner came to an end at midnight.

The farewell to Moscow was the last phase of my trip.

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# Parents' Death

Father completed 95 on August 22, 1969. We went to Puri for a few days when he came to Cuttack during the summer vacation. We had come to Puri that year too. Both father and mother had come with us from Cuttack to Puri. We were supposed to return after the *Bahuda Yatra.* Father wanted to stay back for a few more days. We postponed our return to Cuttack accordingly. I had to go to Calcutta on some work. But I returned to Cuttack on the 21st morning. My wife telephoned· me from Puri on the 22nd morning that father was having a fever. I left for Puri immediately. I had decided earlier to come to Puri on the 22nd as father was turning 95 that day and we had ordered some *bhog* at the Jagannath temple. I was told at Puri that it was cloudy on the 20th and a cool breeze was blowing. A few people had come from our village to meet father. He was resting at the time. He got up suddenly from the bed and came out in bare body to talk for a long time with the people on the verandah. There was a slight fever during the night. He finished his daily chores on the morning of the 21st as usual. But the fever persisted. I gave him some homoeopathic medicine procured from Chakradhar Mishra on the 22nd. He was feeling uncomfortable although there was no pain. He breathed his last at ten in the morning on the 23rd. It was as if he passed away of his own will the day after he completed 95. He had finished his daily chores himself till the 21st and read the newspaper too. He did not suffer from any disease. We had always seen him lead a chaste life. He was honest to the core amid poverty and wants. And he had enough confidence in his own ability. Others will say how much of these have rubbed off on us. My sons Baby and Basant had made a gift of seventy five rupees to him before dinner the day he turned 75. I had thought of doing something similar on

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his ninety fifth birth day. But it could not be done. Many of his friends and acquaintances from Cuttack, Balasore, Singhbhum, Berhampur and Puri had expressed their sympathies through letters and telegrams upon getting the news of his demise from radio and newspapers. Father had completed his studies from Middle Vernacular School and Cuttack Normal Training School to start his career as a teacher in the minor school located at Harachandi Sahi of Puri. He passed away at Puri itself. A section of the Samanta Chandrashekhar Library in the Heragouri Sahi of Puri has been named in his memory. It is known as the Kashinath Library. His oil painting was opened there by Jagatguru Shivananda Saraswati Swami, the chief of the Shankarananda *Math* on August 2, 1971. Pandit Jagannath Rath and Dr. Mahadev Mishra had organized that meeting. We have set up a public charitable trust in his memory. Financial assistance is being provided to poor people from the fund for medical treatment and education. A temple too has been built at a place. We have provided partial help in another place too. A small amount is donated at the time of natural calamities. I am happy at the initiatives of my elder son Pravat in these respects.

Mother passed away eight years later at Cuttack on August 30, 1977. Her body was cremated at the Swargadwara in Puri. The rites were performed there. The people from our village had come without any reservations to Puri to attend the *shraadh* ceremonies of both father and mother. We are grateful to them for their cooperation.

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# Ten Years After Patna

A telegram arrived from the agriculture ministry of the central government at Delhi a few months after my return from Patna. I was requested to conduct hearing at Calcutta regarding a few disputes relating to the forests of the Andaman Islands under the Arbitration Act. Ranganath accepted the assignment before I could express an opinion in the matter. This work went on for six years from 1970. There were disputes between the central government and a company regarding the lease of the jungles, the value of the wood and compensation. Both the parties had made claims in crores of rupees. The government had taken a house on rent at Gariahat for this purpose. The office of the forest department of Andaman was located at Auckland Place. The government advocate of Calcutta High Court and two other barristers were engaged by them. There were two barristers on the other side. Hearing took place for three days a week. I had no idea that there would be so many witnesses and documents. We did not have to work when the High Court was on vacation. I gave my judgment on 4.3.1977.

There was acute unrest among the students of Utkal University when Sardar Jogendra Singh was the governor of Orissa. Mr. Borai, the registrar of the University, had resigned his post. The governor asked me to conduct an inquiry into the matter in his capacity of the chancellor of the university. Dr. Ghanashyam Mohapatra was the temporary vice chancellor as Dr. Sadasiv Mishra had tendered his resignation. The evidence of Dr. Pranakrushna Parija, Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab, Dr. Sadasiv Mishra, professors, members of the syndicate and the senate, representatives of the students' union, members of the legislative assembly, representatives of the employees association of the university and others had helped me.

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Mr. Borai stopped cooperating with me in the last phase of the enquiry after I gave him notice to open the office room which he had kept under lock and key. He went to his residence to get the keys, but he never returned. A few necessary papers were in that room. The students had certain allegations against Mr. Borai. A few serious lapses in the management of the university came to light. I gave certain suggestions to remedy the situation and submitted my report to the Chancellor. The inquiry office operated from one portion of the Raj Bhavan. The deputy secretary of the chancellor worked as the secretary of the committee.

The situation turned critical in Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology when B.D. Jatti was the Governor of Orissa. There were a few serious allegations against the Vice Chancellor and I was entrusted with the responsibility of making an enquiry on 14.6.1973. The committee held its office in two rooms of the Raj Bhavan. Evidence from witnesses was taken in the Red Cross Bhavan. Dr. Chandramohan Choudhury was the Vice Chancellor. Choudhury was replaced by Jagannath Das, I.A.S. during the period of enquiry. Dr. Baidyanath Mishra was the Dean. Several complex issues came forth from the evidence of the professors. There was acrimony between the students and the hostels of Agricultural Sciences and Animal Husbandry as instruction was being imparted separately for the two streams. Small issues had been magnified out of proportion. The non-teaching employees of the University had a lot of grievances. I investigated into all these on the basis of evidence given by the witnesses, spot enquiries and several documents. I submitted my report on the management of the university to the chancellor on 31.12.1973. It took me six months and seventeen days to complete the assignment.

The Government of Orissa set up a committee for the reforms of jails in Orissa on March 2, 1979. The secretary of the law department, additional secretary of the home department, Dr. S.N. Rath, the professor of sociology of Sambalpur University, Sri Murari Prasad Mishra of Sambalpur who was the member of the State Jail Management Advisory Board and the Inspector General of Jails (who acted as the secretary) were the members of the committee. I was appointed the chairman. We had to make a detailed study of the problem. A new jail manual was written by bringing about several amendments in the jail manual of 1942. I was busy in this work for about two years and a half. We submitted our report on September 30, 1981. Janaki Ballav Patnaik was the chief minister of Orissa at the time.

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An act had been promulgated in the British Parliament in 1824 regarding the administration of jails. This had drawn the attention of a lot of people. A committee had been constituted in 1836 in India with such eminent people as Lord Macaulay and others to consider reforms in jail administration. There was no trace of the report of the committee or the follow-up action either in Calcutta or in Delhi in spite of out best efforts. Another committee had been constituted in 1864. No written proceedings of the committee were available either. The committee's report has been mentioned in some documents of the Government of India. But it could not be ascertained whether any change had been brought about in the jail manual or jail administration on the basis of the recommendations. A conference of officials connected with jail administration had been held in 1877 and another committee had been subsequently constituted in 1988. On the basis of the recommendations of this committee, the Prison Act, 1894 and the Prisoners Act, 1900 had been promulgated in India. As a result, uniform practices were followed in jail administration throughout India. But there was no qualitative change in the outlook in this regard. The Government of India constituted the Indian Jail Committee in 1911. This committee had studied the conditions prevailing in the jails of countries like Britain, America, Japan, the Philippines, Hong Kong, etc. and the administration in these jails. It had analysed the terrible conditions prevailing in Indian jails and had given valuable suggestions regarding the administration in jails. Unfortunately, there is no proof that the recommendations of the committee had been implemented. Dr. W.C. Rackless came to India forty years later in 1951 to make a study on administration of jails in India when the Government of India sought the help of the United States in this regard. He had prepared a draft of the reforms needed after spending a great deal of time in India. A training session had been conducted for the high officials connected with jail administration at Bombay at the time. The first open air jail was opened in Uttar Pradesh. The Probation of Offenders Act was promulgated in 1958. Caning prisoners was banned in 1955. An international conference had been held in Geneva under the aegis of the United Nations in 1955 on eradication of crime and behaviour towards criminals. The proceedings of the conference had been sent to all countries. Awareness about jail administration was created in the government circles as a result. The Government of India had constituted a Jail Manual Committee in 1956. They had come out with certain model rules in their report submitted after three years. The Government of India constituted a working group to consider jail administration in detail in 1972 as the recommendations of

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the 1956 Committee had not been implemented. It was decided to include the recommendations of the working group in the five year plan of the country. The intellectuals of the country as also the Government realized the importance of administration in jail keeping in view the fact that the criminals ought to return to the society as healthy citizens after completing their prison sentences. It was realized that it was more important for the criminals to return to the society in a reformed state after their prison sentences than meting out punishments to the criminals.

All the state governments were required in this context to bring about reformative changes in the jail manual. The central government wrote a letter to all the state governments on February 7, 1976 exhorting them to implement the recommendations of the working group (1972) at least in those areas which did not involve large expenditures. The Government of Orissa had appointed our committee for this purpose. Another committee had been appointed earlier in 1952 under the chairmanship of Late Lalmohan Patnaik, the then Speaker of the Orissa Legislative Assembly, and the committee had submitted its report to the Government of Orissa in 1955. However, no step had been taken to implement the recommendations of the committee.

The management of jails and the rules applicable to undertrial prisoners, convicted prisoners and juvenile delinquents are governed according to the jail manual in Orissa as also in other states. Before Orissa was declared to be a separate state in 1936, different parts of Orissa were governed according to the jail manuals prevalent in different states such as Madras, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar-Orissa. The Orissa Jail Manual had been hurriedly prepared in 1942 by lifting various portions from different manuals. It was not surprising that there was no emphasis on reforms of jail administration in the manual. The jail committee constituted in 1952 by the Government of Orissa did not have the mandate of amending the jail manual. We had to do it.

The change that has taken place in the attitude towards crimes and criminals in the civilized world in the last one hundred years may be judged from a comment of an English High Court in 1871 and another comment of an Indian High Court in 1978. An English judge had said in Ruffin *vs.* Commonwealth in 1871, "He has as a consequence of his crime not only forfeited his liberty but all his personal rights except those which the law in its humanity accords to him. He is, for the time being, the slave of the state."

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A hundred years later, in 1978, the Supreme Court said the following in the case between Charles Shobhraj and Tihar Central Jail in the changed circumstances, "It is now well settled, as a stream of rulings of courts prove, with deterrence, both specific and general, rehabilitation and institutional security are vital considerations.... A prisoner retains all rights of a free citizen except those lost necessarily as an incident of confinement." Necessary changes were needed in the basic objectives as also many parts of the manual in order to incorporate the changed attitude towards crimes and criminals. I prepared drafts by revising 50 to 60 pages at a time and sent them to the members. After the drafts were sent back and forth in this manner for a few times, a meeting of the committee was convened to discuss the provisions before accepting them. We had to do a lot of hard work in the process. Our visits to various jails of Orissa, Tihar Jail of Delhi, Vizag Jail, Hyderabad Jail, etc. helped us to analyse the advantages, disadvantages and propriety of the differences in jail administration and to draw suitable conclusions. Our report, recommendations and amendments to jail manuals were prepared with an emphasis on exploration of ways to increase the self-esteem and integrity of prisoners. We also prepared drafts of certain new laws and recommended that they be enacted. We had prepared a questionnaire consisting of 90 questions and sent them to 850 respondents that included ministers, legislators, parliament members, judges, jail visitors, freedom fighters, district magistrates, jail superintendents, lawyers, doctors and educationists in order to get their opinions. It is indeed sad that the Report has neither been studied nor implemented properly until now. The central jail has not yet been established as a separate institution. I considered my labour to be somewhat worthwhile when I read recently from the newspapers that a few new laws have been enacted and an open air jail has been established.

I was part of another enquiry committee in April 1978 when Bhagabat Dayal Sharma was the Governor of Orissa for one year. Nilamani Routray was the chief minister at the time. The Government of Orissa appointed a committee on 7.4.1978 to enquire into the management of the Jagannath Temple of Puri and suggest improvements. The Governor was the chairman of the committee and Gajapati Dibyasingh Deb of Puri, Harekrushna Mahtab, Biswanath Dash, Nityananda Kanungo, Radhanath Rath, I, Nanda Kishore Das (former Speaker) and Ayodhya Dash of Balaram Kota *Math* were the members. Bibhuti Bhushan Tripathy, I.A.S. (Retd.) was the secretary. A sub-committee was formed

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from the beginning with four members for uninterrupted investigation, verification of documents and discussions considering the importance and complexity of the matter. Harekrushna Mahtab, Radhanath Rath, Nityananda Kanungo and I were in the sub-committee. Our work, recommendations and report were discussed and passed at the meetings of the full-fledged committee. We concentrated on one aspect at a time and submitted a report to the government on that aspect. The first report was given on 6.7.1978, the second on 24.8.78 and the third on 14.12.78. The final report which contained the fourth report was submitted to the Chief Minister on 31.3.79 in a meeting held in the afternoon at the Raj Bhavan. The Gajapati of Puri resigned from the committee a few days after it started functioning. The sub-committee had to bear the entire responsibility. I had had an opportunity to observe all the rituals and management of the kitchen and the Ananda Bazar (the place where the *mahaprasad* of the Lord are sold) in this connection by staying at Puri for a period of twenty days at a stretch. I had considered it necessary to observe everything *incognito* so that no one would get wise about my real purpose. I had disclosed everything that I had learnt in the process before the sub-committee for its consideration. The sub-committee had overcome numerous hurdles to prepare a list of all the jewellery stored in the *Ratna Bhandar* of the Temple. The list formed part of the report. Efforts had been made to get assessors through the governors of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh for a valuation of the jewellery. But it could not be done before we submitted our report. We had requested the state government to undertake the valuation exercise as we had prepared the list of jewellery. It is a matter of regret that it has not been done until now and no action has been taken on our report either. The only suggestion that has been implemented is to set up a *hundi* (a box to receive donations in cash and kind). I could know a great deal of things by acting as a member of this committee.

Commissions and committees are set up in our country only to defer action. Enquiries are conducted with a lot of fuss and people are reassured that something concrete will come out of it. The complainants and the common people lose their ardour by the time the report comes out. The pressure on the government is no longer there. There is no enthusiasm for any action to be taken. The concerned files gather dust if there is no fear of agitation. Our governments do not take important matters seriously. The governments wake up only when there are strikes, fasts, demonstrations, gheraos, arsons, lathi charges or firings. The government

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is then compelled to take certain actions. No one takes cognizance of the fact that the unpleasant situations could have been avoided by timely action. A great deal of labour, man-hours and money is spent on commissions and enquiries which go waste when no follow-up action is taken on the recommendations or conclusions. Just as a time schedule is prescribed for the submission of the reports, the law should similarly set a time frame within which the recommendations ought to be carried out. Ideally, the report submitted by a committee should be taken up for consideration by people of the same level and caliber as the members of the committee. Unfortunately, notings are given on the reports from the lower levels of employees in the secretariat, and there is excessive delay by the time the report reaches the higher levels. Most often, the *raison d'etre* of the original committee is no longer there. The final decision is not taken on the original report but on the basis of the remarks of various officials on the original report. This cannot be justified under any circumstance.

Yet another problem is that the cooperation of people is not easily available in an enquiry. If a questionnaire is sent to a thousand persons, not more than one fifth of them respond and the committee is lucky if one tenth of the latter number turn up to give evidence. One commission at Patna was an exception to this rule. More reliance has to be placed on the available documents in such a case. It is natural on my part to consider the propriety of the information as I have spent time in the two segments of the judiciary. As a result, a major part is deleted from oral and written evidence. I found from my own experience that more reliable information can be obtained through cross-examination than the conventional evidence. Most complaints become redundant by the time they arrive in the written form. The focus is more on suspicions rather than events. Harekrushna Mahtab had come twice without any reservation to give evidence at the time of the enquiry into the affairs of Utkal University. Similarly, Dr. Pranakrushna Parija had come to the circuit house where evidence was being taken. I had expressed a desire to go to his house. He came of his own accord and said that it was he who should come to me. Incidentally, at the time of the enquiry into the affairs of the Agriculture University, a distinguished person had assured me more than once in other places that he had photostat copies of relevant documents and he would provide them at the enquiry. He did not come forward to furnish any document, forget about giving evidence. Very few private individuals came forth to give evidence at the time of enquiry into jail reforms. Even those people who had been jailed during the freedom struggle and who could

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have made valuable suggestions from their own experience chose to remain silent. Many government servants in general and retired jail employees in particular had expressed their viewpoints and pointed out the flaws in jail management. I had once gone to London during the term of this committee. Lord May's Report on jail reforms had just been published there. I discovered that the committee had received enormous support of the people at the time of its enquiry. I also saw the extensive discussion that ensued in the newspapers and television following the publication of the report. There was no scope for the government to sit on the report. I was told that comments were first given on the reports of committees by the concerned secretary (minister) following which it is discussed in the cabinet. Finally, a statement is given to the House of Commons and steps are initiated to implement the recommendations. The government in that country has to always contend with a conscious public. And what about us?

One or two persons have to bear the brunt when there are several people in a committee. The others only participate in the discussion and put forth their viewpoints. It is obvious that one person has to prepare the final draft of the report. I have always accepted this responsibility. There was a major agitation of the students in Orissa in 1980. It was the most intense in the campus of the Utkal University. Dr. Mahendra Kumar Rout was the vice chancellor. The government formed a large committee and made him its secretary. Harekrushna Mahtab was the chairman. Radhanath Rath, Dr. Sadasiv Mishra, Justice Raj Kishore Das (Retd.), Balakrushna Patra, Prof. Prahalad Pradhan, Shraddhakar Supakar and I were members. There were several factions among the students. All the student leaders were under the patronage of some political party or other either openly or under cover. There were more demands than complaints. The meetings of the committee were being regularly held in the syndicate Hall of the university. It had sat twice at my residence at Cuttack. It had been held once in the university's guest house. The Committee gave a primary report about certain demands of the students. The final report was given on 26.12.80. The government accepted most of the recommendations of the committee under the pressure of the students.

About ten years were spent in this manner by serving various committees after my return from Patna. I have never got tired of work or responsibility.

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# EMERGENCY AND AFTERWARD

Things changed swiftly during the emergency in India in 1975. The Allahabad High Court invalidated the election of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Consequently, she declared a state of internal emergency in the country on the advice of Sidhartha Shankar Ray just for the sake of maintaining *status quo*. She always believed in dictatorship; it got legal sanction after this proclamation. The freedom of the citizens and the fundamental rights were abrogated. The government created a fear psychosis among the people by arresting them at random. Nandini Satapathy was the Chief Minister of Orissa at the time. Orissa went a step further than Delhi. Cuttack Collector Nalini Panda crossed all limits. Forget about the people in power; even their family members flexed their muscles in the public. They were a law unto themselves.

Nabakrushna Choudhury came to my house one day along with four other persons. He said that a meeting had been held in Sriram Chandra Bhavan the day before and it had been decided to form the Civil Liberty Committee in Orissa. They wanted me to be the president of the committee. I was worried. But I agreed to the proposal. The People's Union of Civil Liberty (PUCL) was formed at the national level in Delhi under the presidentship of Justice Tarkunde who had retired from the Bombay High Court. The meetings were held at times in my house and often at the Gunanidhi Bhavan in Thoria Sahi. The police stalked us at our back on the direction of Inspector General Narasingha Swain. They had never approached us from the front. Branches of the committee were formed in the districts. I went to a few places. Others went elsewhere. The committee had received the cooperation and affection of the students, the youth and parties opposed to Congress (I) as it had raised a voice publicly

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against the emergency. It was expected that it should be looked upon with disfavour by the ruling party and that came to pass.

Many people were arrested at Cuttack. Mahtab Babu and Naba Babu were also not spared. I had gone to Puri in the last week of March of 1976. Chandra Shekhar Mohapatra, the news editor of 'The Prajatantra' (an Oriya daily published from Cuttack), arrived there along with two other persons with a letter written by Mahtab Babu on 26.3.76. I was told that the government planned to humiliate Mahtab Babu and the Prajatantra by not allowing the Visuva Milan (a literary function held every year in the premises of the Prajatantra) to be held that year. Mahtab had been released on parole for a few days but it had been stipulated that he could not leave Bhubaneswar and go elsewhere. The Visuva Milan was scheduled to start on April 11. Mahtab Babu had written to me to take charge of the function. I accepted the responsibility and returned to Cuttack the next day. A secretary came to dissuade me from getting involved and said that he had been instructed by the higher-ups to give me the message. The police too made similar efforts under the pretext that there could be trouble at the function. The message sent to me was that I should not get embroiled in controversies of this kind as I was not in active politics. The gentleman who had sent this message to me had not balked at lauding me for my work during the emergency during the tenure of the Janata Government later when he had to introduce me at the prize distribution ceremony of the Police High School where I was the chief guest. Mahtab was given permission to attend the Visuva Milan one day before the function when it became known that the function could not be stopped. He was permitted to go to Cuttack till the 15th of the month. The audience was happier than him that he had been able to attend the function. I was happy too that I contributed my bit in foiling the conspiracy. Mahtab Babu wrote the following to me on 18.4.76.

> "…. It was the Divine Grace which made the function of Visuva Milan successful in all respects. Your stewardship has largely contributed to the success the institution achieved. Since I was permitted to go to Cuttack only till the 15th, I tried to contact you on the 14th and also on the 15th afternoon, but you were out. Otherwise I would have personally conveyed to you my heartful thanks for the trouble which you took. I hope you will not please mind if I insist on requesting you to take continuous interest in the institution which has been built in the course of the last twenty seven years …. My parole period will be over on the 25th. I do not know where I shall be

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> after that date. But I have so much faith in the Divine that all the institutions will go on well even though I may not be present because of the willing sympathy and the support which friends like you rendered to them...."

In the uncertain times that prevailed at the time, he had written another letter on 23.4.76:

> "...most likely I shall be in prison on the 25th. Up till now I have received no order from the Government, except that I shall have to surrender myself to the Bhubaneswar Sub-jail on the 25th by 4 p.m. We are passing through a wonderful period. Nobody knows when it is coming to an end...."

It was true that the Visuva Milan was held on schedule. But people avoided the premises of the Prajatantra until Mahtab Babu was released from the jail because of the fear psychosis created by the government authorities. The same state of affairs prevailed in the *Sarvodaya* office in Thoria Sahi. It is a matter of regret and shame that the educated civil servants, party chiefs and the common people turned into spineless yes-men just because of the whims of one person. The somnolent people were not exactly sleeping. The reaction to the emergency was reflected in the election held in 1977 in the crushing defeat of Indira Gandhi and her party.

I became a member of the Orissa *Sangeet Natak Academy* as the president and representative of *Kala Vikash Kendra* on my return from Patna. Dr. Mahtab was the president of all the three Academies. I was elected to the working committee and the management committee of the *Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya*. In the process, I got an opportunity of acquiring hands-on knowledge about the college. Kalicharan Patnaik was the vice president of the academy. The Kala Vikash Kendra was the first private organization to impart training in music, dance and related disciplines. This had started in 1952 because of the pioneering efforts made by Babulal Doshi. Baikunthanath Mohanty, Manoranjan Das and others were his associates. Babulal Babu mentioned in his autobiography that I was connected with the institution right from the beginning. He had received the first donation (one hundred rupees) from me to start the kendra. I did not remember it. Parija Saheb was the president of the kendra for the first two or three years. Shyamsundar Mishra became the president after him for a brief period. I remained as the president for the next thirty years. Mahtab Babu had expressed his satisfaction that I had been nominated to the academy and recorded a resolution in the general

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meeting congratulating me. Kuntala Kumari Acharya, another member, had later raised an objection why one member had been welcomed in this manner. The improvements brought about in the functioning of the Kala Vikash Kendra made some people jealous of me. The academy provided annual grants to institutions promoting music and dance. The Kala Vikash Kendra too received similar assistance. The grant was relatively more than what other institutions received. Some people were unhappy about it and they tried to stop or curtail the grants. In one particular meeting, some people engaged an employee to inquire into the functioning of the kendra and submit a report. I was not present at that meeting. I came to know later that the secretary of the culture department had presided over that meeting even though Vice President Kalicharan Patnaik was present. The next meeting was held under the presidentship of Mahtab Babu. I pleaded that the previous meeting was unlawful as the vice president had not presided over it even though he was present. As a result, the proposal to withhold financial assistance to the Kala Vikash Kendra could not be conceded. Mahtab accepted my viewpoint. But he passed me a chit which contained a compromise formula. The full grant was sanctioned in favour of the Kala Vikash Kendra. It was recorded that the vice president had not presided over the previous meeting as he was not feeling well. I continued as a member of the academy from that time.

I was appointed its president in 1979 March after the emergency had been lifted. Dhiren Padhi, I.A.S. was the director and Manoranjan Das was the secretary. Minati Mishra was the principal of the college. Work was carried on with a lot of gusto. A few experts were assigned the responsibility to frame the grammar of Odissi Music. It was also decided to publish it when the work was completed. The college was affiliated to the Utkal University by overcoming several hurdles. Another important work undertaken was to stage a play in the Udaygiri caves which has been in existence from Kharavela's times. Dhiren Das, the Special Officer of the Academy, had made all the arrangements with quiet efficiency. The governor had inaugurated it and Dr. Mahtab had presided over the function. Our objective was to prove that the cave was being used in ancient times to stage plays. I had felt gratified as the beautiful setting of the evening had captivated a large number of spectators. I wished to hold an annual dance festival at Udayagiri in the lines of the Khajuraho Dance Festival. The proposal had been sent for the approval of the Government of Orissa and the Government of India. My association with the academy had ceased before I could take further steps in this regard.

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I wished to convert the Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya into an autonomous institution like the Khairagarh Indira (not the former Prime Minister but the princess of Khairagarh) Sangeet Kala Viswavidyalaya. Khairagarh is located in Madhya Pradesh. But a few teachers wanted to enjoy the benefits of being government servants. They received the support of Chief Minister Janaki Ballav Patnaik through the concerned minister and the college was brought under the culture department of the government after delinking it from the academy. The proposal slowed down for a while when I commented that this was an act of espionage and the institution could not make much headway in the future if it was accepted. But the decision was taken later which prompted me to resign my post. I still had a few months to go to complete my term.

There had been a lot of controversy in another matter. But I had derived a great deal of pleasure out of it. It was decided to send a dance troupe overseas for the first time on behalf of the academy under the aegis of and with financial assistance from the Government of India. The artistes were selected and all arrangements were made to send the troupe under the leadership of Dhirendranath Patnaik, the assistant secretary of the Academy. At this time, the concerned minister and secretary started interfering in the matter insisting that the daughter of a Congress (I) legislator should be included in the troupe. I refused to oblige saying that it would be unfair to drop someone from the troupe who had already been selected for the tour and take someone else in her place. The secretary tried to influence our decision by contacting the central government through telegrams and telephone calls. This had been done at the instance of the minister. Failing in his mission, the secretary then tried to prevent the assistant secretary from going on the tour. Dhiren Babu courageously informed the secretary that he was carrying out the orders of the President of the academy and went away to Europe with the troupe. It was natural that the minister should blow a fuse. But the matter did not come to an end there. The college was delinked from the academy perhaps to clip the wings of the academy. Apparently, they believed in the adage 'cut the nose to spite the face'.

The *Viswa Hindu Parishad* is a non-government, national organization. Its branches are there in all the states of India and overseas. The government does not look favourably upon the organization as it openly opposes the conversion of poor and backward hindus by non-hindu organizations into other religions. It is also a severe critic of the government because of its apathy towards the problem. Many government

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employees in high position come forward to help the parishad in organizing the hindus and providing service in the fields of education, health and religious practices. The parishad is especially active in the areas thickly populated by the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The chairman of the parishad is the descendent of Rana Pratap of Mewar. It is managed by a trust board. A governing council looks after the day-to-day operations. The secretary of the Parishad came to me from Delhi at the time of the Emergency and pestered me to activate the organization in Orissa and be the president of the Orissa branch. I have no idea why he picked on me. Ramaprasad Mukherjee, retired judge of Calcutta High Court and son of Sir Asutosh, was the first chairman of the Parishad. I accepted the responsibility when I came to know that the Parishad was not antagonistic towards any religion and its chief objective was to make the Hindus aware of the glorious tradition of their religion. I became a part of the trust board, governing council and the foundation trust, and became the vice president of the central council as also the president of the east zone comprising of West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, Sikkim, etc. I attended the conferences of the Parishad at Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Varanasi, etc. and gradually came to know about the serious problems confronting the Hindus in their own country after Independence. Several rich businessmen, industrialists and religious gurus are associates of the Parishad. The Parishad is ever busy for the proliferation of Sanskrit education. More than fifty thousand rupees had been collected and paid to the Parishad to bring the Rana of Mewar for the first time to Orissa to felicitate him. Harekrushna Mahtab, Radhanath Rath and others had provided unstinted help in this regard. The Parishad does important work whose ramifications are widespread. It needs as much public support as it can get.

The *Vishwa Hindu Dharma Sammilan* had met in Patna in 1969 March. Several distinguished people had come from different places and the Sammilan passed off very smoothly. The king of Kashi was its chairman. I was surprised to receive a letter from him as follows on May 9, 1969.

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May 9, 1969
Fort Ramnagar, Varanasi,

Dear Mr. Justice Mahapatra,

The recent session of Vishwa Hindu Dharma Sammilan held at Patna on the last three days of the month of March could be successfully held primarily because of the valuable cooperation and sympathy which the local promoters could receive from you. As the president of the body, I give my hearty thanks to you for this zeal in the cause of Dharma and I am sure you will continue to help us in our efforts to make our body an effective forum for the Hindus residing throughout the world.

Yours sincerely,
Vibhuti Narayan Singh

The Hon'ble
Mr. Justice Harihar Mahapatra,
7, Serpentine Road,
Patna–1

Secularism has been adopted by our constitution. But secularism does not mean religions would become irrelevant. There should be no hesitation on the part of the government to be sympathetic towards the chaste practices of all religions and help every religion in an impartial manner. However, it is seen that the government is not bothered about the undesirable activities of non-hindu organizations while it is extremely perturbed by the organizations formed by hindus. This betrays the weakness of the government. Every religion of the world including hinduism is now confined to a few people. Most people are, in general, apathetic towards their religion. People think of God only when they want to get or achieve something which they do not deserve, or when they feel threatened for some reason. They make offerings to God at such times as if He has been waiting all along to receive bribes. I had been to a church one Sunday in London a few days back. I found only three persons besides the priest. Two of them were a couple whose age was more than eighty and the third was an even older woman. The priest told me that people no longer wanted to come to the church. A few people turned up at the time of X'mas. The priest said that he was the only person to be found there every

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day. The mosque is ordinarily full with people on Fridays. People throng the temples only on festival days.

Babulal Doshi agreed to convert the Kala Vikash Kendra into an autonomous institution like the *Kala Kshetra* at Madras. A small amount of financial assistance was available to the kendra from the state and the central governments. This too was not on a regular basis. The kendra was always beset with financial problems. The teachers were paid measly salaries. The buildings had been constructed through the donations collected from private sources by Babulal Doshi. We concluded that teaching can be imparted more effectively by the kendra with the amount of interest received if a foundation trust could be created with a corpus of ten lakh rupees. We would not have to depend on the grants of the government in that case. Three lakh rupees were collected from outside Orissa through the efforts of Babulal Doshi. The chief minister donated one lakh rupees, and I and Babulal donated fifty thousand rupees each. An eminent industrialist had declared more than once in the annual functions of the Kendra that he would donate one lakh rupees. But the money was never made available in spite of our repeated verbal and written reminders. Six lakh rupees have been collected until now. We are still making efforts to get to the target. Babulal and Shyamsundar Mishra of the Servants of India Society had written me affectionate letters when a non-businessman and a middle class man like me contributed fifty thousand rupees unexpectedly. After the annual function was over in the presence of the governor, I had put the cheque inside an envelope and given it to Babulal without saying anything. He had been overwhelmed to see it the next morning. He had been amazed that I had not given it publicly in the meeting. The donations given by him and others were usually declared in the presence of everyone at the time of the annual function. It was not my donation; I owed it to the kendra.

I had to go again to America in the middle of 1980. The rotary convention and the regulations council were being held in Chicago. Six other delegates from different places of India had attended the council. A meeting of all the delegates had been held at Delhi before our departure. Many others had gone to attend the convention. Delegates had come from all over the world to attend the council. One got introduced to distinguished people within a short time. Friendship also developed with a few of them. There were several proposals for the consideration of the Council. All decisions were taken by keeping an eye on service to the people. How arguments can be made with mutual respect is something

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that is to be seen. Languages other than English are also used. The language of the speakers automatically got translated into English, Japanese, French and Spanish before being heard on the earphone. One had to press the particular button to hear the proceedings in the language of his choice. The council went on for three days at the rate of nine hours a day. A delegate of Australia sat near me. He was an elderly teacher and a refined person. He insisted that I should speak on those proposals which took longer time to dispose of. He was good with numbers. He said that a proposal would be carried if I spoke in favour and rejected if I spoke against it. As luck would have it, this came true a few times. I spoke about it in jest before others and someone labeled me a 'miracle speaker' during the coffee break. The calculations of the Australian friend turned out to be wrong in case of a major proposal. I advocated that women should be permitted to become members of the rotary but it was rejected when votes were taken on the issue. The Japanese delegates voted against it *en masse*. The same was the case with the Americans and Europeans. The wives of the Rotarians were sitting in the visitors' gallery while the discussion and voting was going on. They eagerly waited for the results. It was enjoyable to see the wives of delegates voting against the proposal giving a hard time to their husbands. Women were all the same everywhere. Be they white or black, they are happy one moment and angry the next moment.

I extended my stay in Chicago by two days because of the requests made by a few Oriyas who I knew and who had settled in Chicago. Bhabesh, the son of Late Ramachandra Dash of Mayurbhanj who was the Inspector General of Police, was in his house with his family. His twin brother Paresh was visiting him at the time. I stayed for a few hours in his house. He took me to his office and the houses of a few of his friends. Bhabesh was as much of a workaholic as he was an optimist. He brought out a flashy tie that would go well with my suit. Paresh said the tie may go with the suit but the pertinent question was whether I liked it or not. It was replaced by a more sober tie. I went to Sudhansu's house in the evening. He was the son of Somnath Mishra of our village. I had no idea earlier that he was there. He came to see me and took me to his house. His wife and two kids were there. I was pleased that they had come from Biswanathpur in Puri to settle in Chicago. I learnt that his wife was the younger sister of the wife of Lokaratna Kunjabehari Dash. Sudhansu's mother was distantly related to us. She was the cousin sister of my wife. Sudhansu was a self-made man and was now established in a foreign country. He took me on a dark, rainy night to his home and dropped me

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back at the hotel after dinner. The Oriyas living in Chicago had a get together at one place the next day. They were very happy to see me. Someone sang and someone danced. Someone performed a mimicry. A few asked me about their relations in Orissa. They were not content to prepare only Oriya dishes. American dishes had also been laid on the dining table. All of them were of the same age as my children. One person amazed me by handing over a letter written in Oriya. My friend Shradhakar Supakar of Sambalpur had written to his son about my trip to Chicago and exhorted him to meet me positively. I had not told him anything about my trip. I was indeed gratified that he had found out from someone about my trip and asked his son to meet me. It showed his affection for me.

Our host that day had been living in Chicago for a long time. It was a well-furnished Duplex house. Everyone had eaten a great deal before we sat down for dinner. The guests kept visiting the kitchen at regular intervals. There were more people who were interested in tasting the food than those engaged in cooking. When someone liked a dish, he passed it to others to taste it. The lady of the house locked the kitchen after some time to get a reprieve from the marauders. But one intelligent lady collected the duplicate key from the husband and everyone was again on the rampage. Games like these went on for a long time. I discovered that countrymen really got united in a foreign country. Now the Oriyas have a strong organization in America. The inhabitants of one area get together on festival days. An annual function is held at the national level. They invite artistes from Orissa to perform there. They organize discourses on Lord Jagannath.

All Indians including Oriyas living overseas are confronted with a cultural dilemma which is gradually assuming alarming proportions. Their children do not take pride in being Indians. They come to India till the age of fifteen or sixteen when their parents come here. Resistance starts after that. The parents have attraction for their motherland even after getting citizenship because of their properties in India or family ties. The children do not have any such attachment. They have no connection with religious or cultural traditions. They cannot realize at their tender age that the animosity towards the immigrants is increasing gradually due to economic factors and this can create serious problems for them in future. A few geniuses might overcome it. But most people would find themselves ostracized. A Sikh friend is an efficient physician in America and he makes good money. He has built his house on a large tract of land. He said he was

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looking for suitable bride and groom in India for his son and daughter. I asked him the reason. He said that they would lose their identity if they married Americans. Their children will be distanced from their roots for all time to come. Therefore, the Sikhs send their children for six weeks (in the least for four weeks) to India after they attain the age of ten to specified places in Punjab to learn about the conduct of their religion. One can realize the seriousness of the problem from this.

I returned to London from Chicago. I met with an English friend on this trip. He had worked for a number of years in Calcutta in a real estate company. He had retired and returned with his wife to live in his own house. He had one son who lived elsewhere. He had come to meet me when he knew that I was coming to London. I found him in an ecstatic state. He said that he and his wife had received the senior citizen card as they had completed sixty five years of age. That implied that they have to pay much less for journeys by trains and buses as well as in cinema halls. They would be exempt from capital gains tax and get a host of other benefits. Medical treatment was totally free. People above sixty five now constitute one-fifth of the total population of Britain. A lot of arrangements have been made at the governmental and non-governmental levels to provide them with security, health facilities, housing, etc. It is reported that a single old man or old woman lives in one seventh of the total number of houses. No one is ever likely to visit ten lakh old men and women. Five lakh old people have no relation at all. One lakh ninety eight thousand old men and women are not capable of going to bed without the help of someone. Ten lakh fifty six thousand old people cannot walk without help.

Apart from opening old people's homes, several other arrangements have been made for the aged. Two hundred forty one minibuses run at specified times and to specified destinations exclusively for them. They can go to shops, hospitals, libraries, cinema halls or picnics in the buses. They may simply move around in the buses too. No other passenger uses these buses. There are people in the buses to take care of them. Loneliness is the biggest curse of the old age. The mind remains depressed due to loneliness. Everything around them seems to be meaningless. One hundred and thirty one day centres have been opened to address this problem. The old people may go there to chat with people of their age. Tasty and nutritious food is available there at subsidized prices. Two day hospitals also function for these people. It takes longer in the old age to be cured of diseases. It also takes longer for convalescence. It is not possible to

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continue to stay at a hospital after one is cured. But it is also difficult to manage at home on one's own. One can spend the days at the day hospitals where service, treatment and diet are provided to the visitors and they get an opportunity to interact with doctors, nurses and psychiatrists. When an old man or woman lives alone, outsiders may not be able to know if anything goes wrong. There is hardly any socialization there as is the custom in our country. Everyone is busy with his own affair. In the process of maintaining privacy, they have reached the stage of deprivation. Automatic alarms have been placed in five hundred houses where very old and ailing people live. The alarm will be set off if there is an emergency. People outside would know about it and help out. An institution called 'Help the Aged' has taken up such activities and many people come forward to provide financial help when an appeal is made by the institution. These things go to show how the English people care for the aged. However, only speeches are made in our country. Even then we boast that service and sacrifice are at the root of our religion!!

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The Family, 1935

Wife, Haripriya

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The Family, 1978
*Four Generations*

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The Family, 1978
*From left: Prabhat, Wife, Self, Sumitra*
*Standing: Basanta, Bichitra, Anant*

At Patna High Court, 1960

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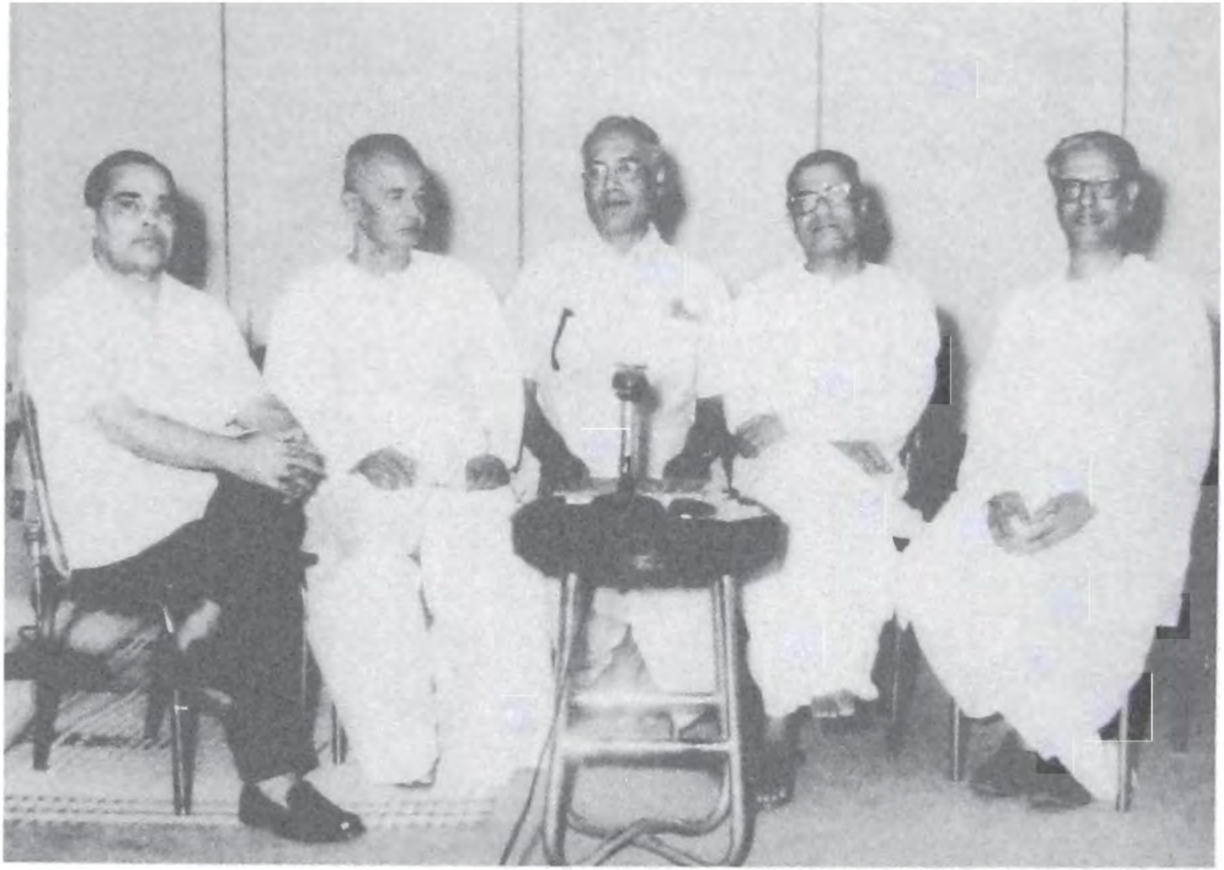

Sabuja Sahitya Group, 1955

*From left: Self, Baikuntha, Sarat, Kalandi, Annanda*

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**My Life, My Work** is a storehouse of information about one of the most interesting phases of Orissa's history which makes fascinating reading because of the inimitable style of the author. That one man can lead such a fulfilling life and can be engaged in a myriad of activities simultaneously is indeed revealing. There seems never an inactive moment in the life he led.

**Justice Harihar Mahapatra** was a multifaceted personality. By profession, an advocate, he also served as a Judge in the Patna High Court for a long period. He was neither in active politics nor did he subscribe to any particular viewpoint. But he had the ability to carry most people with himself. He was a resourceful person with a great deal of confidence in his own abilities. He spurned a Lok Sabha seat when it was offered to him in a platter. Yet he was actively associated with every aspect of political and social life of Orissa during his time.

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